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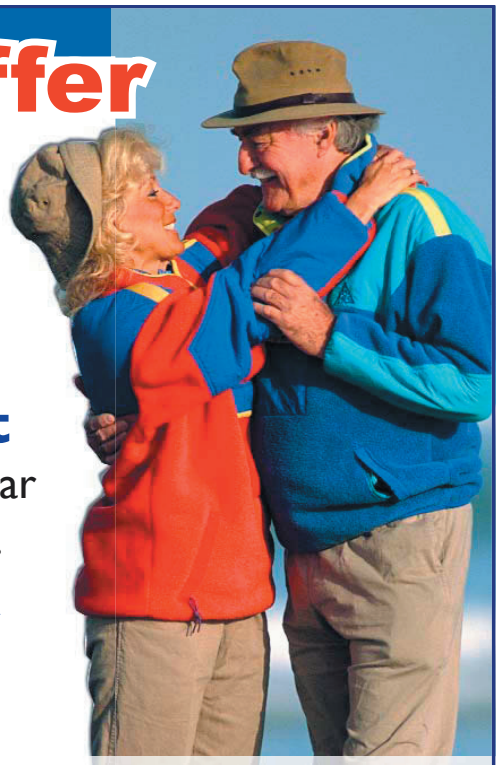

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Cover Photograph image by Phil Borges;
"Dolkar 5, Tashi 6. Dolkar and Tashi live in the Tibetan children's village in upper Dharamsala, India along with 2,000 other Tibetan children that have been orphaned or sent out of Tibet by their parents. I was told that Dolkar was an extremely sensitive child but has adapted rather well since her arrival at the children's village over a year ago. Tashi who was orphaned as a baby has come to be known as the joker of their class." Phil Borges, is an internationally acclaimed photographer and author, whose more than 15-year career has been devoted to the welfare of indigenous and tribal people throughout the world. www.philborges.com
Bridges to Understanding is an interactive online classroom program that connects youth in indigenous communities throughout the world with their urban counterparts in North America. Volunteers are trained to mentor students in the skills of digital photography and storytelling. Borges created Bridges in order to support the voices of indigenous youth, and to give students from all backgrounds an opportunity to teach one another about their cultures. Information about Bridges and its mentorship program available at www.bridgesweb.org

ISSUE 165 APRIL 2005

IN THIS ISSUE

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Aisle Six at Story Slam – Magpie Ulysses 9
Bill Hicks standup political philosopher – Geoff Olson 10
Blossoms or bombs – Ishi Dinim 29
Filmmaker peers in to abyss – Robert Alstead 29

CULTURE

Economics of social change – John Restakis 6
Pride: the seven deadly spins – Geoff Olson 8
Let's trade fair – Chantal Harvard 15

ENVIRONMENT

Europeans block biopiracy of neem – Organic Consumers Association 5
Climate science keeps ticking – David Suzuki 21

HEALTH

Jon Kabat-Zinn meditating health 10
Michael Odent birthing humanity – Thom Evans 11
Drug induced nutrition depletion – Dalia Taher 16
The case for a GMO-free PEI – Marya Skrypiczajko 18
Eat your way to health – Vesanto Melina 19
The cancer epidemic: part 1 – Guy Dauncey 20

SPIRITUALITY

Enlightenment rising above – Eckhart Tolle 12
Emotional peace – Gwen Randall-Young 13
Freedom from the inner critic – Byron Brown 17

RESOURCE DIRECTORY 22
CLASSIFIEDS 30
ZODIAC 30
DATEBOOK 31

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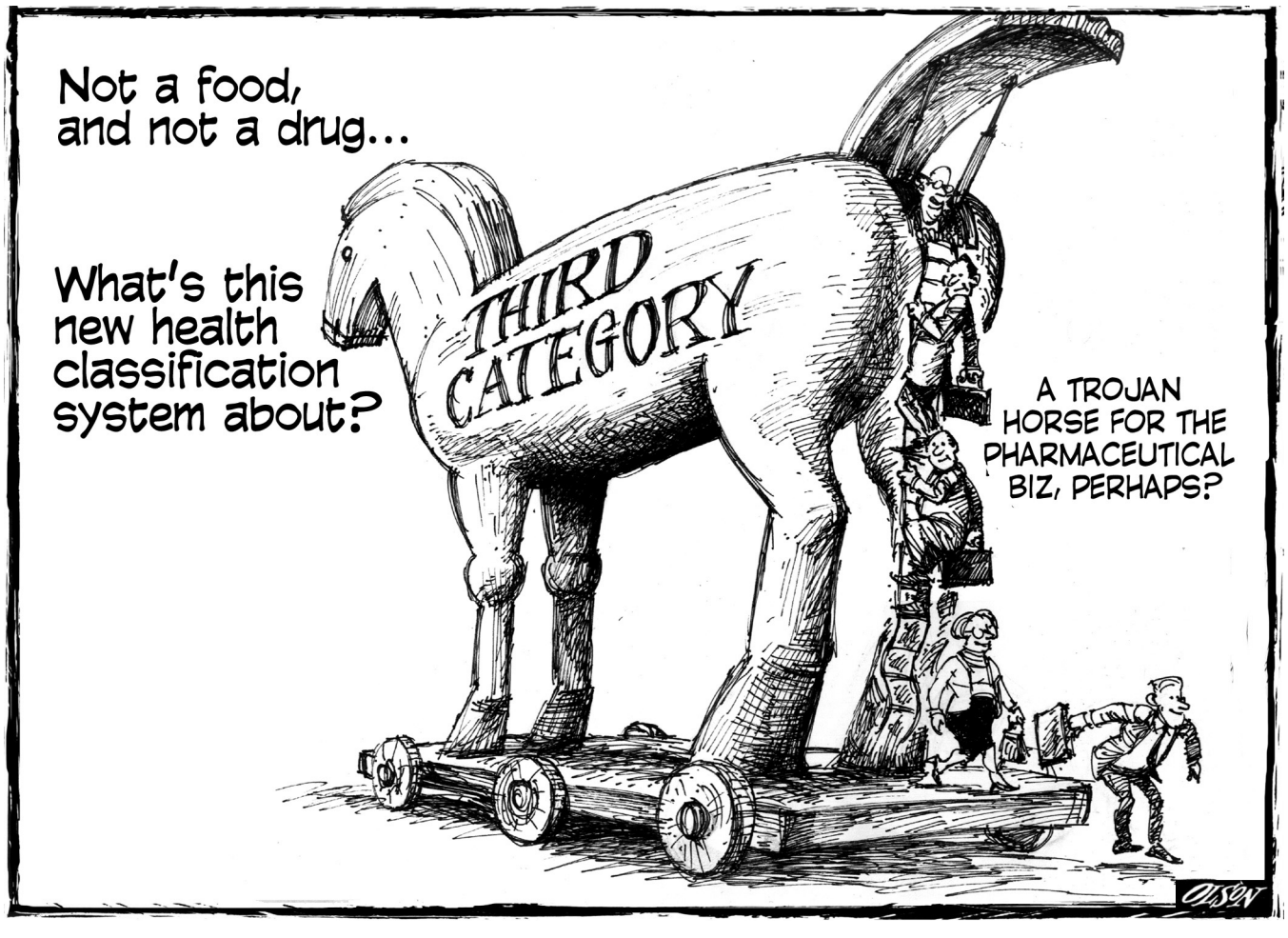
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What's this new health classification system about?
THIRD CATEGORY
A TROJAN HORSE FOR THE PHARMACEUTICAL BIZ, PERHAPS?
OLSON

European patent office blocks biopiracy of neem

from the Organic Consumers Association

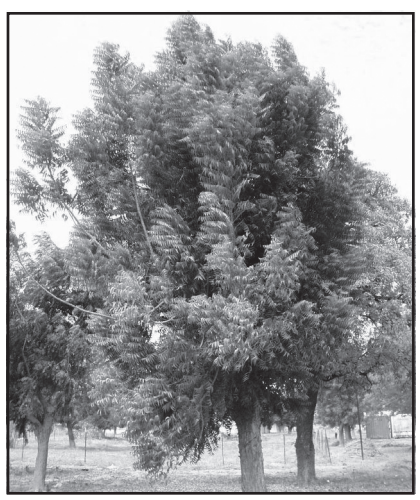
In a landmark decision March 8, the European patent office (EPO) upheld a decision to revoke in its entirety a patent on a fungicidal product derived from seeds of the neem, a tree indigenous to the Indian subcontinent.

The historic action to halt biopiracy resulted from a legal challenge mounted 10 years ago by three opponents: the renowned Indian environmentalist Vandana Shiva, Magda Aelvoet, then MEP and president of the Greens in the European Parliament, and the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM).

Their joint legal opposition claimed that the fungicidal properties of the neem tree had been public knowledge in India for many centuries and that this patent exemplified how international law was being misused to transfer biological wealth from the South into the hands of a few corporations, scientists, and countries of the North. March 8 the EPO dismissed an appeal by the would-be proprietors, the USA and the company Thermo Trilogy.

Dr. Vandana Shiva, who travelled from India to be present at the hearing, commented, "What a lovely celebration for the women of India that this long-awaited decision falls on March 8, International Women's Day.

Denying the patent means upholding the value of traditional knowledge for millions of women not only in India, but throughout the South…This victory is the result of extremely long solidarity. It is a victory of committed citizens over commercial interests and big powers."



Magda Aelvoet, Belgian minister of state and former health and environment minister, was president of the Green Group in the European Parliament when the original opposition was submitted. Just after the ruling, she commented, "Our victory against biopiracy is threefold. First, it is a victory for traditional knowledge and practices. This is the first time anybody has been able to have a patent rejected on these grounds. Second, it is a victory for solidarity: With the people of developing countries definitively earning the sovereign rights to their natural resources and with our colleagues in the NGOs, who fought with us against this patent for the last 10 years. And third, coming as it does on International Women's Day, this is also a victory for women. The three people who successfully argued this case against the might of the US administration and its corporate allies, were women: Vandana Shiva, Linda Bullard and myself. It can also inspire and help people from developing countries who suffer the same kind of theft but did not think it was possible to combat it."

Linda Bullard, former president of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), stated, "We are deeply gratified that through our case the EPO has recognized the intellectual achievements of the South. We were able to establish that traditional knowledge systems can be a means of establishing "prior art" and thus be used to destroy the claims of "novelty" and "inventiveness" in these biopiracy patents. This now becomes case law, but the historic precedent must be further developed and transposed into overall international legal frameworks so that this type of theft is no longer possible."

The case was so clear that the technical board of appeals needed only two hours to reach a decision to dismiss the appeal.

The opponents to the patent were legally represented throughout the 10 year battle by Dr. Fritz Dolder, professor intellectual property with the faculty of law at the University of Basel, in Switzerland. Dr. Dolder explained that a reformulated claim submitted by the patent holders as part of their appeal was rejected on formal grounds. Subsequently, the main body of the patent was tested with regard to novelty, disclosure, and inventive steps and revoked irrevocably. This is the first time that the EPO has legally concluded a biopiracy case."

www.organicconsumers.org/patent/neemtree030905.cfm

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The economics of social change

by John Restakis

Rarely has there been a time when such profound changes have become so deeply embedded in our society. We live in an age when traditional certainties about the role of government, about work, about human relations, seem to be reinvented and recast according to the whims of a force which is operating beyond anyone's control or consent. Everywhere it seems, everything is being reduced to the value of a commercial commodity.

But it is also clear that more and more people, from all walks of life, are searching for real alternatives to the direction in which our society is heading. People are thirsting for positive change.

At the heart of this desire for change is the feeling that our economic institutions are beyond our control. That decisions that affect our lives every day are made not for our benefit, but for the benefit of the powerful and the privileged. And that the social values that are the lifeblood of community are constantly corroded by an ideology that says all things are subservient to the market. This simplistic "economism" is not only deeply flawed and profoundly destructive; it has also assumed the trappings of an infallible dogma. (www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=262)

Perhaps the most dangerous outcome of the triumph of corporate capital and the ideology of unfettered commercialism is the erosion of people's capacity to imagine an alternative. When the local hospital or sawmill is shut down, or the encroachments of globalization undermine local culture and community, we are told there is no alternative. This is the way of the world. Adapt, or perish.

But alternatives do exist that embody an approach to economics and social relationships that is broader, more humane, and more capable of distributing economic benefits fairly while preserving a sense of human solidarity and community.

The cornerstone of a viable alternative to corporate capitalism and its fixation on economic hierarchy and unfettered individualism is co-operation and the economics of reciprocity.

I have been a co-op activist and organizer for 10 years. And I believe there has rarely been a time when the values of the co-operative movement were more relevant than they are today. And if the co-op model has served as a powerful and practical ideal in the past, it has even more to offer for the future.

For those of us who believe that a more humane world is possible, it is our responsibility to show what such an alternative might look like. What does it mean to build a co-operative future?

The glimmerings of such a future are present and thriving all around us, both at a global level and in our own communities.

Recently, I was in Argentina to learn more about the phenomenal efforts on the part of unemployed workers in that country to resurrect the thousands of factories that had been bankrupted and then abandoned by their previous owners. This is a country that was once touted as the golden example of capitalism in Latin America. That is, until the practices of a corrupt elite conjoined with the policies of the IMF to generate the world's largest- ever bankruptcy of a national economy in 2001.

With unemployment hitting record highs and the bank accounts of citizens frozen, a mass movement demanded economic reform, and local control over the levers of economic power. And one of the most powerful symbols of this resistance was the recovered factories movement in which 200 factories were expropriated by their workers and turned into worker-owned co-operatives. These co-ops became the means by which workers could stake a legal claim to their work and show that there was another, more creative, and democratic response to plant shutdowns than passive acceptance.

Today, many of these factories are beginning to show profits in exactly the same markets that previous owners had abandoned. (Editor's note: This movement inspired Naomi Klein and Avi Lewis's documentary *The Take*)

Another example that has gained international attention is the co-operative economy of Emilia Romagna in northern Italy. Using co-operation as their foundation, the people of this region have generated a powerhouse economy that not only delivers the highest per capita income in Italy, but thanks to its 15,000 co-operatives, the lowest unemployment, the best social safety net, and the highest quality of life index in the country.

There are countless other examples of how people and their communities have decided that economic power can just as easily be employed by average citizens as by the traditional elites. Today, the co-operative movement worldwide is the most enduring economic alternative to capitalism, with over 1/4 of the world's people receiving everything from health care and housing, to fair prices for their coffee and cocoa. For millions, co-ops are their only access to the market.

In Canada today, there are 12,000 co-operatives with 15 million members in communities from coast to coast. Many of these co-operatives were the economic engines that developed local economies, from agriculture on the prairies to the fishing industries in coastal communities.

Today, 40 cents of every dollar earned by a farmer comes by way of a co-operative. There are still nearly 1,000 communities in Canada where credit unions are the sole financial institutions.

In BC alone, there are more than 700 co-operatives and credit unions with one in every four people as members. Collectively, the co-op movement in BC employs 13,000 people and holds $20 billion in assets.

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In all these enterprises, whether they provide jobs for workers, distribution of produce for farmers, or home care to seniors, the members own and operate these co-ops to serve their interests and the interests of their communities.

So the alternatives to corporate capital are already with us. Which is not to say that capitalist firms don't have a fundamental role in our economy. It's only that they are not the only kind of enterprise that can succeed in the market, despite the best efforts of right wing ideologues to make it appear so.

For those of us who believe that co-operation and mutual benefit is a superior alternative, the challenge is to find new ways in which the co-operative form can meet the changing conditions of economies while responding to the evolving needs of people, both as citizens and as consumers.

And, just as the displaced workers of Argentina decided that by acting together they could turn an economic tragedy into a story of triumph, so too the thousands of mill workers, fishermen, and health care providers can look to co-operative solutions as a way of running enterprises where maximizing profit isn't the only objective. There are many examples of viable enterprises that are shut down because they don't deliver the bloated returns expected by investors. For workers, these same enterprises could provide decent employment while producing needed goods or services to their communities.

This is a lesson that needs to be relearned by British Columbians who have come to believe that the workings of the market are somehow beyond their control. Or, that the only responses to plant shutdowns are passivity, protest or the hope that some benefactor will ride to the rescue.

Co-operatives remain a potent tool for economic and social reform. And although we live in a different age than the industrial revolution when co-ops were created to address mass unemployment and consumer and worker exploitation, the fundamental issues are still with us: unaccountable economic power, monopoly, unethical behaviour, and the manipulation and exploitation of consumers and workers.

Unlike that age however, people today expect more. They expect that corporations should behave responsibly to communities, respect the environment, and treat their workers fairly. It is no longer enough that quality products and services are made available on the market. People care how those products came to the market, and whether workers or children were exploited in the process. The mass boycotts of corporations like Nike and Nestlé are proof of this.

More and more, consumers today are making economic choices in their identity as citizens in a human community, both locally and globally. And it is in this tension between consumer individualism on the one hand, and the desire for fairness and community on the other that the opportunity for building a co-operative future rests.

Co-ops offer the most convincing alternative to consumer alienation that I know of.

And so the new role of co-operatives is to show how enterprises, owned and operated by those who use them, can satisfy both the demands of the marketplace and the human needs of people in community.

That is a real alternative for a humane future.

John Restakis is executive director of the BC Co-operative Association www.bcca.coop

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Pride

THE SEVEN DEADLY SPINS CONTINUES

by Geoff Olson

Greed drives the desire for profit at any cost. Envy is a mainstay of the fashion industry, and marketing as a whole. Anger is subtly exploited in the Army of One fantasies of video games and recruitment advertisements. Pride fuels the "high self-esteem" bandwagon. In the era of hypercapitalism, these and most of the other so-called deadly sins have been rehabilitated by the market as positive, even praiseworthy, states of mind. "Sin" has been spun. Hence, what I call The Deadly Spins.

A few years back I ran into a friend of a friend at a social event. I asked how things were going. "Great," he responded. "I've only got seven left." An awkward silence followed. "Uh, seven what?" I asked. He slowly brought his hands up to chest level, flipping me the bird in stereo. "Excuse me?" I replied. With a thin smile, he repeated the gesture. I burst out laughing. "Very diplomatic!" I said, slapping him on the back and then walking away.

Later I learned this fellow was referring to seven more episodes of a television series he was producing for a cable sports network. As far as I could tell, he wasn't drunk. He was simply offended by my lack of awareness of his monumental multimedia work, and had no reluctance in communicating this. A little man with a Napoleon complex, and a show that everyone should know, he was sending me a message of social expendability. Simply put, our respective professions didn't intersect, and there was no purpose – no utility – in his treating someone outside his sphere with respect. I could be safely written out of his script.

I discovered later from others who knew him that this encounter was consistent with his character. This guy certainly didn't have any problem with self-esteem. In fact, he could have used rather less of it, and a more realistic assessment of his talent. I'd like to think of him as a bit of an anomaly, but the sad truth is he's just another example of a personality structure that has gained some authority in the past few decades. After years of valourizing the individual, telling him or her to "look out for number one," to "go for it" and to "just do it," we're now seeing the result: the ascendance of the just-short-of-sociopathic personality. The mental state at issue here is overweening pride. Arrogance.

"Superbia, ira, invidia, avaritia, acedia, gula, luxuria."

Pride, or superbia, tops Pope Gregory's Latinate list of the deadly sins. In the hit parade of crimes against body and spirit, pride beats out envy, anger, greed, sloth, gluttony, and lust. The last of two, gluttony and lust, are mere carnal sins. They are sins of the flesh – the body or lower self. Superbia, or pride, is the top sin of the higher self, or soul. Pride's transgression is to make your own ego a personal god.

It's obvious that a certain measure of self-interest and self-regard is necessary to function in the world. What's not quite as obvious is that too much pride or "vainglory" can kickstart a fair bit of bad behaviour. Pride can lead to envy if you find you are not acknowledged or rewarded in the same manner as others. Envy can in turn lead to anger and melancholy, which may feed greed as you try to fill a hole in the soul with money and material goods. And should any of these gambits fail to caulk the opening, there's always the other vices that may act as a temporary stopgap.

"Pride goeth before a fall." The line refers to the worst career move in religious literature, described in the Book of Isaiah. Lucifer, first-born of the angels, was powerful and beautiful, but also proud and presumptuous. He aimed too high and defied God, who banished the original rebel angel from heaven. Lucifer's crime in challenging God was the defining sin of the Judeo-Christian universe. The sin of pride, of ego.

The word "sin" itself is of Indo-European origin, going back 5,000 years, which is as far back as etymologists can trace any word with assurance. In a 1989 interview on the CBC *Ideas* series, Cambridge university theologian Don Cupit explained the beginnings of "sin."

"People are told not to cross over lines. So many of the oldest words for sin in the Old Testament, for example, imply trespassing, transgression, overstepping the mark, crossing a boundary that you shouldn't have crossed in some way. When you violate a line or boundary in that way, it creates a condition of ritual impurity that you've got to purge by some kind of sacrifice or compensation, and it's from that primitive origin that the doctrine of sin develops…"

Cupit holds that the Judean concept of sin was elaborated further by Christianity into the idea "of the universe as a hierarchy, a divine order, rank above rank, and sin becomes a matter of not keeping to your proper place in the scheme of things."

Over the past 500 years, the western world's attitude toward pride, and our place in the universe, became less damning and much more dynamic. This transformation is central to the construction of the modern secular psyche. During the Renaissance, humanist scholars rediscovered the ancient Greek conception of the autonomous individual as the measure of all things. A hugely liberating social transformation swept across a continent still reeling from the plague and feudalism's collapse. The rise of mercantilism, freeing believers to pursue personal wealth without guilt, allowed the rise of a secular money-economy in which the individual was central.

The Catholic church, which historian Lewis Mumford once described as the "tomb built on the body of Christ," no longer functioned as the sole arbiter of everyday lives. Protestantism transformed the individual's relationship with God to a more personal dynamic, in which a deity could be gloried through Good Works and the acquisition of personal wealth, further pushing the individual to the center of all things.

Science delivered the coup de grace. The stiff Aristotelian universe inherited by Christian clerics, where change was equated with corruption, was shattered into pieces by a succession of thinkers, from Galileo to Einstein. There have been obvious gains from this intellectual freedom (and especially freedom from the guilt and fear pitched by the church), but at a price. The individual has been reduced to a free agent adrift in a dynamic, but fundamentally meaningless, universe. A cosmos where morality is as relative as the observer's point of view offers freedom, but it is largely the nightmare freedom of the void.

The irony is that over time one set of chains – dogmatic, anti-intellectual – was exchanged for another set – individualistic, technocratic, and materialistic. Science and spin entered into a Luciferian relationship, pitching a new kind of fear and limitation to the citizen-consumer, with a mass market responding to newly-created desires. From the early twentieth century on, psychology, organizational management, and the dark arts of public relations combined to valourize the individual, even while making him or her greater prey to the hypnotic forces of mass persuasion. There was – and is – much to enjoy from the triumphs of hypercapitalism, but the deal has a dark side. From the Aztec collapse to the Belgian Congo's slave trade to the resource wars of the present day, the West has bought its pleasures largely on the back of others, in places where market forces have meant more stick than carrot.

Today the citizen/consumer of the West has become the deciding unit of social measurement, and pride is no longer considered a sin. Quite the opposite; it's just another word for high self-esteem – the more the better, in theory. As I noted earlier, a certain healthy amount of pride, the defining trait of the ego, is necessary to mediate the world. But it's all the negatives attached to the ego – fear, envy, and greed – that fuels the money culture of mass desire. Community gets reduced to isolated atoms of consumption, resonating to advertising's ceaseless signal: "me."

Yet in most cultures throughout history, "looking out for number one" would land the true believer into a hut on the outskirts of the village, or even outright ostracism from the rest of the tribe. Too much pride is toxic to the social mix of indigenous people, but here is the irony: it is the very foundation for consumer culture. This is the psychopath writ large, the idiot monster that is ravaging the biosphere and threatening our future survival.

Ironically, the finger-waving acquaintance mentioned at the beginning had no shortage of self-esteem. In fact, you'd be more likely to call him boastful and arrogant – qualities that aren't necessarily a hindrance to success. Society often

continued on page 31

Aisle Six
a story about fruit

So much to say and the clock is ticking, but the it's your friend; it likes you succinct, precise. So does your audience at Our Town Café, 245 East Broadway on the Second Wednesday every month for Word Whips and Story Slam. The following is the winning March 9th Story Slam.

by Magpie Ulysses

Friends tell me I should write more smut. They say that when a girl says dirty things it's somehow funnier. Apparently it depends who you're asking. Not that I wouldn't mind being the D.H. Lawrence of the twenty-first century. Go on: ban me. But I have come to learn that there are moments for smutty and moments for diplomacy. I mean, just last week I met with contempt at the supermarket just for being me. For once I didn't even have to open my mouth and say anything.

Imagine this, there I am standing in aisle six with a raised fist, looking at the canned ham. I'm wearing a pink mini skirt, army boots and a button on my T-shirt that says: "Jesus would slap the shit out of you." I'm eavesdropping on two old ladies as they squabble over the last can of mushroom soup.

Often though, I wonder what it means for my grandma to be sexy...Yep, my grandma's been getting picked up at the supermarket.

Then I hear, "Margie, I'm just going to aisle two to get some of those stimulated bacon bits…"

If anything makes me laugh, it's language play like this, but now they're looking at me like I'm some kind of freak.

I already know what dinner conversation will be:

"Oh Georgie, I was with Margie down aisle six, and all I said was I was going to get some of those stimulated bacon bits, you know, the ones you like, and then this atrociously rude girl in these black boots was laughing hysterically, I thought she might be crazy, you know, they just let them free these days.

"But Margie says, 'It's okay, she's probably a lesbian anyway.' "

Like I said, there are times for smut and moments for diplomacy.

Where my sexuality fits in is confusing because these two ladies had nothing on me. If they only knew that at that exact moment my friends were in the produce section, talking about how the exotic fruit looked like pussy. If only they knew that I was too busy to worry about what they had to say. I was stunned, captivated in thought, wondering what my grandma would think if she didn't know me.

I'm pretty sure if she knew half the things I said, she'd probably never talk to me again. Never mind the one-quarter of what I do. I mean: she'd be sending me off to theology school. Often though, I wonder what it means for my grandma to be sexy. Every time she goes for groceries lately someone asks her to go for coffee. Yep, my grandma's been getting picked up at the supermarket.

She tells my mother over the phone that she has declined the offers.

When my mum asks her why, she replies, "What if they want more than a coffee?"

"Mum, you just say No."

"Well I've never had to before," she says.

At which point my mum breaks off conversation, saying, "I don't want to know any more."

My grandma's a bit freaked when she calls me, but I tell her not to worry, adding that, "Three quarters of a century never looked so good and with tits still as high as yours…"

"Oh my, oh my God!"

(Yeah, back to that smut and diplomacy thing.)

But you see: my grandma has been concerned from day one with me. Maybe it's because I had a mother from the seventies, who taught me the appropriate words for my anatomy.

Or maybe it has something to do with this story in my family about a trip across the country when I was two. The train pulled into a station and the conductor said:

"We'll be in Regina for about 20 minutes,"

And I started yelling, "Vagina! Vagina! We're going to…?"

At which point my grandma leaned over to my mum and said, "See, I told you not to teach her those words so early."

I'm working on broaching the subject of sexy though. Last spring I watched *The Vagina Monologues* with her. We only got 20 minutes in when she went to do dishes, saying, "Oh my God, that word, oh dear, that word."

I was surprised for the reaction to come so early considering we hadn't even made it to the monologue about the word cunt.

Apparently, I'm learning, generations past just aren't ready to open up. So, I have to remember to be gentle with her, let her remain steadfast in the fact that she only had one lover ever, learn to hold my tongue when she says:

continued to page 31

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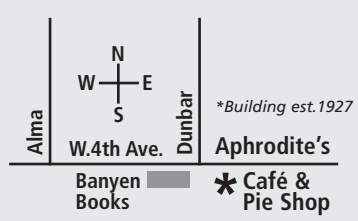

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Bill Hicks stand-up political philosopher

by Geoff Olson

"This house notes with sadness the 10th anniversary of the death of Bill Hicks, on February 26, 1994, at the age of 33; recalls his assertion that his words would be a bullet in the heart of consumerism, capitalism and the American dream; and mourns the passing of one of the few people who may be mentioned as being worthy of inclusion with Lenny Bruce in any list of unflinching and painfully honest political philosophers."

- Stephen Pound, British MP, 2004.

I'm watching a ghost – and a damn funny one as far as ghosts go. A pudgy-faced Texan, comic Bill Hicks puffs on a cigarette and paces the stage, launching into a tirade against his nation. Outrage building, the black-garbed comic berates his US audience for their inferior grade eight education, and spits venom about the Oz-like public relations machinery that fronted for the "fascist" Ronald Reagan.

Much of Bill Hicks's late eighties and early nineties material has an eerie relevance today. "You know we armed Iraq," he told the audience in a 1992 routine preserved on the CD *Revelations*. "I wondered about that too, you know during the Persian Gulf war those intelligence reports would come out: "Iraq: incredible weapons – incredible weapons." How do you know that? "Uh, well...we looked at the receipts."

"I'll show you politics in America," he added. "Here it is, right here. 'I think the puppet on the right shares my beliefs.' 'I think the puppet on the left is more to my liking.' 'Hey, wait a minute, there's one guy holding out both puppets!' "

Once describing himself as "Chomsky with dick jokes," the motormouth Texan reviled comics who blunted their edge to become court jesters for the throne of commercialism. He hated the sell-outs who offered the rubes inoffensive humour about airline flights, cats and McDonald's. Shills like Jay Leno came under his withering attack for urging "bovine America" to inhale more Doritos. He frequently pleaded with people working in advertising or marketing to kill themselves for the good of the species. Although his material was always blue and often misanthropic, it was more shock than shlock. The frequent comparison of Hicks to Lenny Bruce still holds. And like Bruce, Hicks would eventually outwear his welcome in his homeland.

How did I conjure up this clown? Through an online file sharing network, I found enough of his routines to burn onto disc – and "burn" is the best word to describe Hicks, a comic who lit a fire under the asses of comedy clubgoers expecting one-size-fits-all gags from a high-school-educated comic. He burned bright, and he burned fast. A drawling, brawling critic of all that white-bread America routinely blinds itself to, he lives on today on the Internet, a blackfly preserved in the amber of cyberspace. (A Google search of his name yields 251,000 hits.)

How big is his posthumous following? On the anniversary of his death last year, there were anniversary parties in London and Belfast, and comedy club salutes in his Texas hometown. A biography has been written (*American Scream* by Cynthia True), and the label Rykodisc is adding to the Hicks legacy with new concert CDs and rare material. New DVD material of past performances is slowly being released.

Born in Valdosta, Georgia, and educated in the Southern Baptist faith, the young Bill Hicks moved with his family to Houston, hometown of the Bush dynasty. He began doing comedy routines in his bedroom, repeating Woody Allen lines. By the age of 14 he was performing at a Christian camp – which gave him the interesting experience of self-censorship in his early teens. According to an article on Hicks on *Wikipedia*, "his parents took him to a psychoanalyst at age 17, worried about his behaviour, but the psychoanalyst could find little wrong with him."

In 1978, the *Comedy Workshop* opened in Houston, and Hicks started performing there while still in high school. In his first brush with the big time, the 23-year-old Texan landed an appearance on the talk show *Late Night* with David Letterman in 1984. Impressing the host, Hicks did 11 more appearances on the show, all well-received. As his star rose, Hicks's drug consumption increased. By 1986, he was in bad financial straits, but an appearance on Rodney Dangerfield's *Young Comedians Special* in 1987 revived his flagging career. Moving to New York City, Hicks performed nonstop and quit drugs, leaving cigarette smoking as his only vice, which figured prominently in later skits as he baited non-smokers in the audience.

Starting with an appearance at the *Edinburgh Fringe*, Hicks became a fixture in the comedy scene across the pond, where he was hailed as a prophet of American excess. His British audiences had the benefit of cultural distance from Hicks's topical targets, but his US audiences had no such chicken-wire for the soul. His

continued on page 33

MORE HUMOUR FROM HICKS

I'm so sick of arming the world and then sending troops over to destroy the fucking arms, you know what I mean? We keep arming these little countries then we go and blow the shit out of them. We're like the bullies of the world, you know. We're like Jack Palance in the movie *Shane*...Throwing the pistol at the sheep herder's feet: "Pick it up." "I don't wanna pick it up mister, you'll shoot me." "Pick up the gun." "Mister, I don't want no trouble huh. I just came downtown here to get some hard rock candy for my kids, some gingham for my wife. I don't even know what gingham is, but she goes through about 10 rolls a week of that stuff. I ain't looking for no trouble mister." "Pick up the gun." Boom, boom. "You all saw him. He had a gun."

~

What do atheists scream when they come?

~

"Oh come on, Bill, they're the New Kids, don't pick on them, they're so good and they're so clean cut and they're such a good image for the children." Fuck that. When did mediocrity and banality become a good image for your children? I want my children to listen to people who fucking rocked. I don't care if they died in puddles of their own vomit. I want someone who plays from his fucking heart.

~

A lot of Christians wear crosses around their necks. Do you think when Jesus comes back he ever wants to see a fuckin' cross? It's kind of like going up to Jackie Onassis with a rifle pendant on."

~

You know the world's 12,000 years old and dinosaurs existed, they existed in that time, you'd think it would have been mentioned in the fucking Bible at some point. And lo Jesus and the disciples walked to Nazareth. But the trail was blocked by a giant brontosaurus... with a splinter in his paw. And O' the disciples did run a shriekin': "What a big fucking lizard, Lord!" But Jesus was unafraid and he took the splinter from the brontosaurus's paw and the big lizard became his friend. And Jesus sent him to Scotland where he lived in a loch for oh so many years inviting thousands of American tourists to bring their fat fucking families and their fat dollar bills. And oh Scotland did praise the Lord. Thank you Lord, thank you Lord. Thank you Lord.

~

Ever met one, no! Ever seen one, no! But they're all over the fuckin' world, putting Bibles in hotel rooms! I'm gonna capture a Gideon.

Michel Odent birthing humanity

by Thom Evans

Michel Odent has revolutionized our understanding of birth and its role in the overall fabric of humanity. Beginning as a surgeon overseeing a small clinic and birth centre in a village just outside of Paris in the early 1960s, he became a leading obstetrical revolutionary, actually referring to himself for a time as a midwife.

Tens of thousands of births later, he maintains the professional notion that an obstetrician should see an average of 1,000 births per year to be considered a fully experienced specialist. He is considered the pioneer of home-like birthing centers. It is Odent who inspired waterbirth, recognizing the remarkable comfort gained by labouring women using baths and pools of warm water to relax and feel secure.

Now a master in his seventies, he currently studies and discusses radically the way humanity develops the "capacity for love," especially in the moments surrounding birth. His discoveries have implications covering almost every facet of civilization. Odent states: "Today the ultimate priority is not to transform farming or to moderate the emission of greenhouse gasses. It is to make possible the advent of another variety of Homo. This variety of Homo – the authentic Homo sapiens – must be able to invent new strategies for survival at a time when the limits to the domination of nature become obvious. She must be able to wonder how the respect for Mother Earth develops. He must be able to participate in a dialogue between humanity and Mother Earth, which implies a certain degree of unification of humanity. In other words he/she must master the energies of love."

The more a society needs to develop the human potential for aggression, the more aggressive are the rituals and beliefs that disturb the physiological process of birth.

Odent is founder of the Primal Health Research Centre in London, England, where he is studying what he calls the "primal period," the development of human life from conception through age one. Modern medical protocols and interventions perpetrated during this sensitive time span, especially at the time of birth, are having a serious and negative impact on what he has come to recognize as fundamental "episodes" necessary for our very survival. He is taking this primal research and correlating it to behaviour and attitudes such as violence and drug addiction in adulthood.

Disruption and intervention of the natural birth experience is not new to culture or history, but the onset of the industrialization of this process is what has escalated the severity of its impact. "The more a society needs to develop the human potential for aggression, the more aggressive are the rituals and beliefs that disturb the physiological process of birth."

There is a parallel to the industrialization of agriculture as well. The technological and economic interests involved in pharmaceuticals and medical research are also the players in transgenic crop manipulation and the chemicals of agribusiness. We now can splice a fish gene into a tomato, potato seed is grown for industry from germ plasma, and terminator technology designed to make seed infertile and therefore suicidal is the current path of our industrial agribusiness food supply. The chemical fertilizers, insecticides, herbicides and fungicides, as well as preservatives, colourings and flavourings, poured on the planet in the hundreds of millions of gallons annually and in concentrations of ingestion equaling our entire body weight every 10 years. They are transferring at dangerous levels into breast milk, and interfering with the hormonal balances of the mother and fetus. Growth hormones, antibiotics and the like are common in the production of animal products. Odent points out in his book *The Farmer and the Obstetrician* that mega disasters have already occurred in agribusiness due to this industrialization – mad cow and hoof-and-mouth disease. Now the threat of an avian flu pandemic fills the news. Industrialized childbirth has not yet experienced such a catastrophic crash, but it leads Odent to pose to the proponents of the modern modality of medical childbirth "Which disaster are we waiting for?"

Odent is not even remotely against knowledge or science, quite the opposite. Knowledge and science feeds his position. He has experienced so many births. He follows all the studies. An extensive database is available for perusal at www.birthworks.com

Odent maintains that a woman at the innermost core in her being knows how to give birth. She simply needs the privacy and intimacy required to feel safe and secure. At the heart of his science is the complex but primal release of hormones interweaving with our state of mind and emotions – instinctive urges that have predicated our survival throughout time.

"The scientification of love is the most vital aspect of the current scientific revolution. We have to develop respect for Mother Earth; we are learning how the capacity to love develops. It is a landmark in the history of mankind, something we might compare with the discovery of fire."

The hormones released during labour are the same as those found in all of our sexual activities and are consistent within mammals, coming exclusively from the primitive part of the brain. In particular, endorphins are clearly linked to our capacity to transcend pain with the feeling of euphoria and pleasure, as well as oxytocin, the love hormone. When we feel inhibited, threatened, afraid, or when the neocortex is stimulated, an entirely different infrastructure is accessed. Adrenaline, commonly referred to as the fight or flight hormone, takes over.

Any number of factors can interfere with the flow of the love hormones designed to encourage ease of birth and mother/infant bonding. Simply nudging the labouring woman's thinking brain by asking unnecessary or untimely questions is considered risky stimulation to Odent.

continued on page 14

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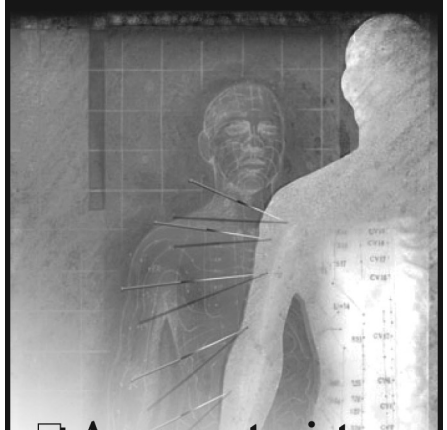

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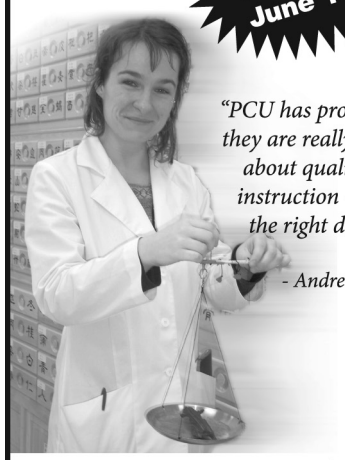

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Enlightenment: rising above

by Eckhart Tolle

So the single most vital step on your journey toward enlightenment is this: learn to disidentify from your mind. Every time you create a gap in the stream of mind, the light of your consciousness grows stronger.

One day you may catch yourself smiling at the voice in your head, as you would smile at the antics of a child. This means that you no longer take the content of your mind all that seriously, as your sense of self does not depend on it.

Isn't thinking essential in order to survive in this world?

Your mind is an instrument, a tool. It is there to be used for a specific task, and when the task is completed, you lay it down. As it is, I would say about 80 to 90 percent of most people's thinking is not only repetitive and useless, but because of its dysfunctional and often negative nature, much of it is also harmful. Observe your mind and you will find this to be true. It causes a serious leakage of vital energy.

This kind of compulsive thinking is actually an addiction. What characterizes an addiction? Quite simply this: you no longer feel that you have the choice to stop. It seems stronger than you. It also gives you a false sense of pleasure, pleasure that invariably turns into pain.

Why should we be addicted to thinking?

Because you are identified with it, which means that you derive your sense of self from the content and activity of your mind. Because you believe that you would cease to be if you stopped thinking. As you grow up, you form a mental image of who you are, based on your personal and cultural conditioning. We may call this phantom self the ego. It consists of mind activity and can only be kept going through constant thinking. The term ego means different things to different people, but when I use it here it means a false self, created by unconscious identification with the mind.

No-mind is consciousness without thought. Only in that way is it possible to think creatively...

To the ego, the present moment hardly exists. Only past and future are considered important. This total reversal of the truth accounts for the fact that in the ego mode the mind is so dysfunctional. It is always concerned with keeping the past alive, because without it – who are you? It constantly projects itself into the future to ensure its continued survival and to seek some kind of release or fulfillment there. It says: "One day, when this, that, or the other happens, I am going to be okay, happy, at peace." Even when the ego seems to be concerned with the present, it is not the present that it sees: It misperceives it completely because it looks at it through the eyes of the past. Or it reduces the present to a means to an end, an end that always lies in the mind-projected future. Observe your mind and you'll see that this is how it works.

The present moment holds the key to liberation. But you cannot find the present moment as long as you are your mind.

I don't want to lose my ability to analyze and discriminate. I wouldn't mind learning to think more clearly, in a more focused way, but I don't want to lose my mind. The gift of thought is the most precious thing we have. Without it, we would just be another species of animal.

The predominance of mind is no more than a stage in the evolution of consciousness. We need to go on to the next stage now as a matter of urgency; otherwise, we will be destroyed by the mind, which has grown into a monster. I will talk about this in more detail later. Thinking and consciousness are not synonymous. Thinking is only a small aspect of consciousness. Thought cannot exist without consciousness, but consciousness does not need thought.

Enlightenment means rising above thought, not falling back to a level below thought, the level of an animal or a plant. In the enlightened state, you still use your thinking mind when needed, but in a much more focused and effective way than before. You use it mostly for practical purposes, but you are free of the involuntary internal dialogue, and there is inner stillness. When you do use your mind, and particularly when a creative solution is needed, you oscillate every few minutes or so between thought and stillness, between mind and no-mind. No-mind is consciousness without thought. Only in that way is it possible to think creatively, because only in that way does thought have any real power. Thought alone, when it is no longer connected with the much vaster realm of consciousness, quickly becomes barren, insane, destructive.

Excerpted from The Power of Now *by Eckhart Tolle, $14 US, $15.75 Canada, trade paperback, published by New World Library and Namaste Publishing www.newworldlibrary.com or www.namastepublishing.com. Also available at local and online bookstores.*

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Emotional peace

UNIVERSE WITHIN

by Gwen Randall-Young

Go slowly, breathe, and smile.
– Thich Nhat Hanh

The most valuable commodity in the world is inner peace. Health, wealth, fame or fortune cannot be enjoyed or appreciated when life is filled with emotional turbulence. Yet, we are human, and things happen in life.

Sometimes, despite our best intentions, determination, and affirmations, we find ourselves caught up in an emotional reaction to a person or situation. If only things would just turn out right, and people would behave as expected, then we could be at peace, or so we think.

The problem with this thinking is that we are waiting for things to be peaceful on the outside before we can be peaceful on the inside. Actually, it works the other way around. When we create stillness and calm within, then our lives become more peaceful. Emotional upset occurs when things do not go the way we want them to. Struggle is created when we try to make things go the way we want them to.

Emotional peace, on the other hand, comes when we learn to accept things as they are, and let go of our need to control them. Of course this does not mean that we put up with abuse or inappropriate behaviour. It does mean that we are more accepting of things we cannot change, more respectful of boundaries (ours and other's), and more realistic.

Sometimes we just have to accept people and situations as they are, and sometimes we have to bless them and move on. If we know a situation or relationship is not good for us, we cannot hope to find peace until we do something about it. In the meantime, we can still cultivate emotional peace. Imagine a beautiful, peaceful sanctuary. Think of it as a safe, healing place. Hold it in your consciousness, perhaps in your heart, and, quieting the mind, go there regularly. When you practise this often, you come to know that peace is always a choice. You can always tell yourself, "A well of peace exists within me, and I can choose to be there any time."

Emotional turbulence is generally fuelled by thoughts, so if we just stop the thoughts for a time and drop into this peaceful space, we see that it is the ego-mind that is having the problem. Without the thoughts, peace returns. Achieving emotional peace does not mean that everything in life has finally settled into a state of perfection. Nothing does. It means that we have freed ourselves from the entrapment of the mind, we are no longer held hostage by our thoughts. We can observe them, see them for what they are, and then let them go.

Sometimes we just have to accept people and situations as they are, and sometimes we have to bless them and move on.

We will still have to deal with the stuff of life, but then we can step back into our place of peace. Practise this, and notice how much more peaceful your life becomes, both inside and out.

Gwen Randall-Young is an author and psychotherapist in private practice and a feature columnist for Common Ground *magazine. Her books, tapes, and new* Healing With Hypnosis *CDs are available through her website www.gwen.ca , or contact her directly at gwendall@shaw.ca. They may also be ordered through Banyen Books.*

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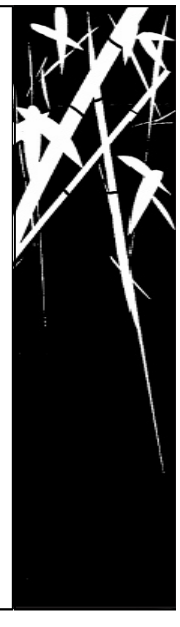

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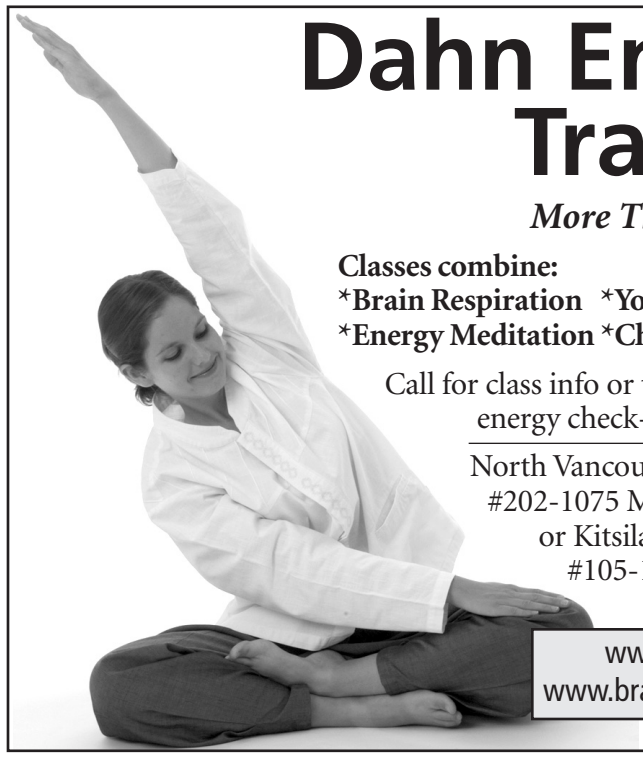

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continued from page 11
Harsh sounds and bright lights are others. Even creating an inhibition of shyness or embarrassment by being observed changes the chemistry. This is escalated manifold when you venture into epidural administration of chemical pain killers, monitoring, machines going bleep, and full anesthetic caesarean surgery surrounded by strangers in masks and uniforms.

According to Odent, these disruptions – when performed unnecessarily – have far greater impact than merely the immediate discomfort of the baby or mother. Whatever is happening to the mother is also happening to the fetus. The complex design of how birth is supposed to unfold has many key functions for survival. The natural flow of endorphins and oxytocin experienced by the uninterrupted mother are fed to the baby as well. This stimulates the bonding process, releases the placenta and fosters the infant's vigor for finding and latching to the nipple. The essential first impressions of the world the child is arriving into are also encoded in this process. Any disruption, Odent has documented, has lasting effects on the individual and society as a whole.

"As a traveller… staying in a city, I need to know how safe the place is. Can I walk the streets after sunset? I just look at local birth statistics. My rule of thumb is that the rates of criminality are correlated with the rates of obstetrical intervention…I'll be extremely cautious in places such as Sao Paulo, Mexico City, Rome or Athens where the rates of caesarean sections are astronomical…I'll be more relaxed on the streets of Tokyo, Stockholm, or Amsterdam."

The scientification of love is the most vital aspect of the current scientific revolution…something we might compare with the discovery of fire.

The higher the rate of major intervention in a given culture's birthing rituals, the higher the rates of violent crime, drug addiction, and psychological pathologies. These are the statistics. Certain places in the world now have the number of caesarean section surgeries performed reaching 80 percent of all births. In Canada we are hovering at around 25 percent and climbing, despite the legalization of midwifery in some provinces.

Legislated midwifery has tended in varying degrees toward the industrial medical model, and has placed the ancient and once independent craft of midwifery under the control of the mainstream and medicated industrial/medical profession. This has left the art of midwifery, certainly on this continent, fractured. Those in conflict with some of the routine procedures of industrialized birth often find themselves leaving midwifery, or are forced to go underground, causing further unnecessary stress and danger to the natural process of birth.

Michel Odent believes these discoveries represent a scientific turning point in the shaping, and even the survivability, of humanity. Healing our attitudes toward ourselves and to each other in harmony with our environment – this is where we find our true disposition as human beings, beginning at birth. This is birthing humanity.

Dr. Michel Odent will be in Vancouver April 26th – 28th, 2005 for a Public Gala presentation followed by a two day conference entitled Birthing Humanity. *For more information you can go to www.crescentwomb.com, or contact event@crescentwomb.com or phone toll free 1-888-853-5841.*

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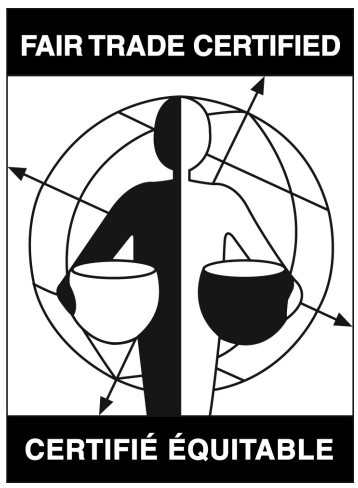
Let's trade fair

by Chantal Havard

From May 1 to 15 2005, National Fair Trade Weeks will be celebrated all across the country. Those two weeks, happening for a fourth year, are aimed at increasing awareness about fair trade and its impact, by organizing information, education and tasting events, as well as cultural events. The slogan chosen this year is: "Small act, big impact!", because as citizens and as consumers, what we buy has an impact: on the producers, on the environment, and on the economical models we wish to support. To buy a fair trade certified product is to support fair and good working and living conditions for producers in developing countries. But let's start at the beginning.

What exactly is fair trade and how did it start? Fair trade was born some 50 years ago in Europe as an alternative and a response to the international trade system's incapacity to address the needs of poor people in developing countries. It is both a citizen and consumer's movement, as it enables people from the North to make a difference in lives of people from the South, by choosing to buy products that have been fairly traded. The main players in the fair trade sector have agreed on this common definition of fair trade:



"Fair trade is a trading partnership based on dialogue, transparency and respect, which seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers-especially in the South. Fair trade organizations (backed by consumers) are actively engaged in supporting producers, in raising awareness and in campaigning for changes in the rules and practice of conventional international trade."

Why is fair trade certification important? (The banana example)

Benefits for small-scale producers: Without direct access to buyers in northern markets willing to pay a fair price, small-scale banana farmers receive only a fraction of their harvest's worth. In fair trade, the producers are organized into democratically-run co-operatives and receive a fair price for their crop, no matter how the market fluctuates. These minimum prices vary by country and organic status, and are designed to cover the costs of sustainable production and provide a decent standard of living for their families. In addition, small farmers receive a fair trade premium on top of the selling price. Co-operatives use this fund for business and human resource development, as well as social and environmental projects.

Benefits for larger plantations: Plantations also receive the minimum fair trade price which covers basic production and labour costs. The fair trade premium goes into a fund managed jointly by union representatives and the banana plantation management. A portion of this premium is designated for business support, which ensures that workers are paid adequate wages. The remaining premium is used for projects determined by the workers' union, just as a co-operative does in a small-scale production.

Benefits for plantation workers: fair trade ensures that plantation-owners can and do provide fair wages to their workers. Several recent media stories have told of banana farm workers in Central and South America who have been intimidated and even attacked for trying to unionize. Fair trade standards ensure that management respects the rights of workers to be part of unions.

Benefits for worker health and the environment: fair trade certification requires that producers use sustainable agricultural practices which protect workers and the environment. On most non-fair trade and non-organic banana plantations, dangerous pesticides are used throughout the growing and harvesting process. International standards for pesticide use are often disregarded by plantation owners and unknown to workers. Neurological disorders including muscle pains, nausea, and dizziness; organ damage to eyes, liver, and lungs; and even sterility in male workers are ailments that banana farmers and workers face because of exposure to these chemicals. Fair trade certification ensures that farmers adhere to all national and international legislation regarding the use and handling of chemicals, and that the most dangerous are not used at all. Although it is not a formal requirement, most of fair trade certified bananas and mangos are also certified organic.

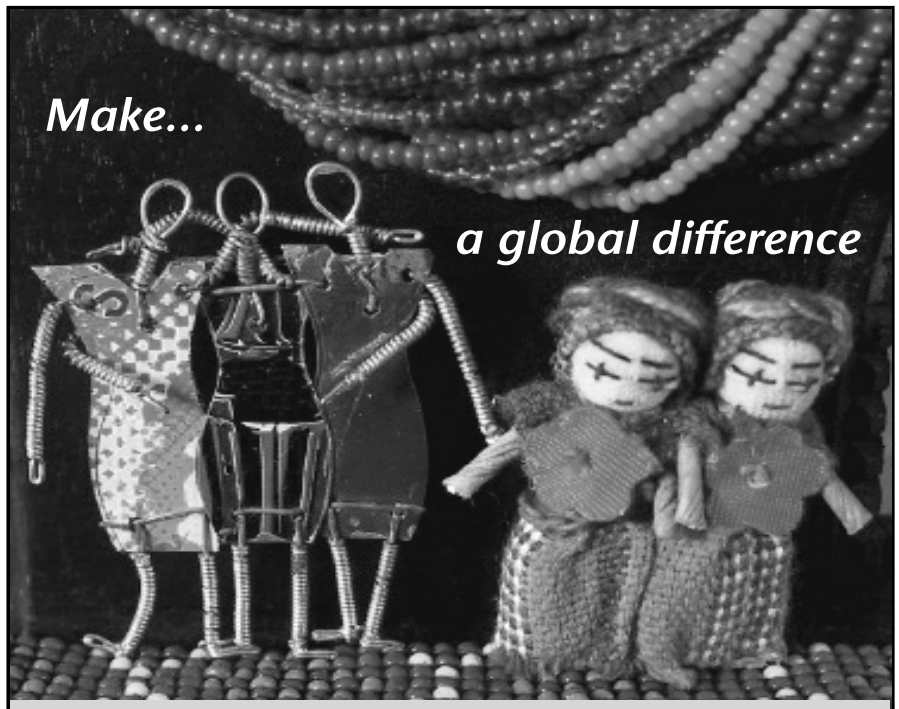
What is TransFair Canada?

TransFair Canada is the only independent, not-for-profit certifier for fair trade products in Canada. TransFair is one of the 17 members of FLO International (Fair Trade Labeling Organizations), the worldwide standard-setting and certifying organization. TransFair Canada has two main areas of activity: the certification of products and public education work, in order to increase awareness on fair trade and build the market for products.

Fair trade labelling began in Canada in 1996. Coffee was the first product made available and is still the most widespread. Fair trade certification monitors the flow of fair trade goods from producers to final package, through a process of reporting and auditing. It also guarantees that all trading partners comply with standards and that producers from developing countries really do benefit.

Standards set by FLO might differ slightly depending on the product and

continued on page 32



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Nutrient depletion

by Dalia Taher

Good nutrition and a healthy lifestyle are basic necessities for lasting good health. Both require a serious personal commitment. Unfortunately, with today's high stress and polluted environment, many of us do get sick.

Millions of prescriptions are written every day, ranging from your typical antibiotic to anti-cancer medications. People trust their doctors and therefore dutifully fill their prescriptions. We trust the medical system and expect that the medication will make us better and not worse.

There is a lot of documented information out there on how medications work, the side effects, interactions, contraindications etc. What has received little research up until now is the way a lot of medications can alter the body's ability to digest, absorb, make, transport, metabolize or eliminate nutrients. Depleting the body of vital nutrients causes medical complications. Very often, a patient is then prescribed an additional medication to counteract the new set of symptoms.

Considering that the general North American diet lacks the minimum serving requirements of fruits and vegetables, it is even more important that we supply our vitamins and minerals from some good source supplements.

To put the importance of vitamins and minerals in perspective, think about the construction of a new building. Carbohydrate, protein, fat and water are comparable to the building materials. Vitamins and minerals are comparable to the architect, contractors and construction workers. Without vitamins and minerals, our bodies cannot synthesize new cells, build new tissue or produce energy.

There are approximately 1,000 commonly prescribed drugs and many over-the-counter medications that deplete one or more nutrients in the body. Commonly prescribed drugs that deplete nutrients include oral contraceptives, estrogen replacement therapy, anticonvulsants, anti-diabetics, anti-hypertensives, anti-inflammatories, anti-ulcer medications, cholesterol lowering drugs, anti-depressants, sedatives and antibiotics. Antacids and laxatives also remove essential nutrients. The problem of nutrient depletion affects the health of millions.

So, what do drugs deplete? Cholesterol lowering drugs, especially lovastatin, simvastatin and atorvastatin interfere with the body's synthesis of a critical coenzyme called CoQ10 which is essential for the heart's health. Older people in good health already have difficulty making CoQ10 so there is a real danger when this population is prescribed cholesterol-lowering drugs. While their cholesterol count may be going down, their heart's ability to function is seriously compromised.

Freedom from the inner critic

PSYCHOLOGICAL GROWTH AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH

"The judge is the force in you that constantly evaluates and assesses your worth as a human being and thus limits your capacity to be fully alive in the present moment." *

– Byron Brown

Disrobing the "judge" and exposing the truth of your nature as a living soul is a journey of liberation. As you come to recognize that you are in a prison guarded by the judge, you appreciate the soul's powerful longing for freedom. Every external form of bondage in human history reflects the psychic confinement of the soul resulting from ignorance and unquestioned beliefs. You are a slave to your own ideas of who you are and how you need to be.

The ability to defend against the judge's attacks and disengage from its activity offers you the possibility of discovering who you are, independent of ideas. Actively standing up for the truth of your experience breaks the habitual patterns of your familiar identity. Where expectations and standards ruled, there can be openness and allowing. Fear of retribution can give way to self-trust and curiosity. From hopelessness and defeat can arise acceptance and confidence.

And truth guides the journey. In combination with the grounding and practicality of your personal will, truth acts as an objective conscience for action in the world. One of the original functions of the judge was to act as your conscience. The judge learned standards of right and wrong from parents and society. Then by using guilt and shame, it helped you as a child to behave and act appropriately according to that moral code. Unfortunately, this process suppressed your spontaneity, aliveness, and instinctual power in order to make you socialized and acceptable. You needed the judge's firm support and direction as you developed your own ability to perceive, evaluate, and understand. However, the outcome of that development was not grounded in your true nature. As an adult you have continued to rely on the judge's internalized standards of right and wrong. Only true maturation can replace the judge with a living conscience. This capacity of the soul depends upon the recognition of your essential nature and the development of your ability to be authentically yourself.

Disengaging from the judge thus serves two functions: to free you from the confinement of old, limiting patterns and beliefs and, at the same time, to demand that you actively practise living in a way that eliminates the need for the judge. You cannot simply throw off a structure that has defined and supported you unless you have something more effective to replace it with.

You must learn to function, interact, and make choices freed from the standards of the judge, which means living in alignment with the truth and reality of your own life at the present time. This creates a living conscience that is not based on rules. Such a conscience allows the fullness of your living soul to express itself. This happens when you have transformed the self-centeredness of instinctual impulses, the self-destruction of compulsive patterns, and the rigidity of internalized authority. This is not a small task. It is the work of learning to be a responsible, mature human being. You cannot plan how to do it, you cannot only read about how to do it, you cannot simply follow someone else's instructions. You must learn how to live spontaneously by recognizing and following the guidance of what you know to be true.

* other terms for "the judge" include inner critic, super-ego or inner judge.

Excerpted from Soul Without Shame by Byron Brown, 1999. Reprinted by arrangement with Shambhala Publications, Inc. www.shambhala.com

Soul Without Shame uses the Diamond Approach of A. H. Almaas to understand the inner judge and gives concrete examples and practical techniques grounded in a uniquely integrated spiritual approach.

Byron Brown is presenting a workshop on Soul Without Shame at the Plaza 500 Hotel in Vancouver, May 6-8, as part of a series of events presented by Diamond Approach Vancouver. For more information contact Judith Bradley 604 251 9033, judithbradley@shaw.ca www.ridhwan.org or www.ahalmaas.com

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continued on page 30

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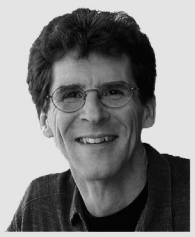

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The case for a GMO-free PEI

THE ORGANIC WAY

by Marya Skrypiczajko

Anti-GMO campaigners from across North America have been congregating on Prince Edward Island for the last month to voice their opinions in favour of legislating PEI as the first transgenic-free province in Canada. After several years of pressure from island citizens and lobby groups opposed to growing genetically modified crops on PEI, the provincial government has begun public hearings to decide whether or not GMOs should be banned. If the ban does become law, PEI could be a trendsetter worldwide.

In 2004 Premier Patrick Binns, a small-scale farmer himself, announced that a standing committee on agriculture, forestry and the environment would begin public hearings in February 2005 on whether or not PEI farmers would be allowed to grow GE crops. Such an enormous turnout of both those in favour and those opposed to the idea has forced the hearings to continue through March. Simultaneously, an economic analysis of the viability of PEI going GMO free has been undertaken and results will be announced in May. While an overwhelming number of people and organizations are speaking out against GMO crops being grown on PEI, the provincial government maintains it is taking a cautious approach and its decision will be market-driven.

More and more countries worldwide are implementing strict regulations on transgenic foods and an increasing number of North Americans have made their own decisions not to eat GE foods

Proponents of the ban point out that as a GMO-free island, PEI will be able to corner a growing part of the international market that does not want GMO-contaminated food products. More and more countries worldwide are implementing strict regulations on transgenic foods and an increasing number of North Americans have made their own decisions not to eat GE foods, thus creating a niche market for both conventional and organic foods. These consumers feel the health and environmental problems are too many and we should not gamble with something so risky.

As an island, PEI has a natural advantage that it has a great buffer zone from other areas that do grow GM crops. It is believed that most pollen cannot be carried that far on the wind.

PEI is small potatoes on the international food market. Island farmers have a hard time competing with the large-scale producers who benefit from economies of scale, and not all of their crops even make it to market. Some sort of change needs to happen. Progressive thinkers are encouraging a shift toward more diverse crops of a higher quality that garner a higher price in the market and would not be as easily undercut by the big producers.

According to the Prince Edward Island Certified Organic Producers Co-op, "… the production of certified organic products and high quality processed products in a GMO-free jurisdiction is the best way to ensure the future of PEI's agriculture industry."

Co-op members also say a GMO ban on PEI will benefit tourism on the island. With ecotourism on the rise, a GMO-free PEI could attract those tourists who value dining on locally produced transgenic free foods in restaurants and B&Bs.

Others who spoke out against GMOs have reminded the public that biotechnology companies are in it only for the money. How can these companies do any good with the inherent health and environmental risks of their products? Furthermore, the anti-GMO side points to Percy Schmeiser, the Saskatchewan farmer who was successfully sued by Monsanto for having its GM canola growing on his property even though he had not planted it. Some came from spilled seed along a main road where tests showed the highest contamination. Other fields were hit with transgenic pollution from wind-blown pollen.

Of course, some PEIers are in favour of planting GM crops. Those opposed to the legislation note that most produce grown on PEI is exported to the USA where there is no anti-GMO legislation and so feel there is no threat to their market. They see GMOs and attendant dangerous chemicals as a tool to keep them competitive in their market and deny any health or environmental risks.

There is no middle ground in the debate. It is heated, it is personal and it is emotional. The public hearings will continue until all opinions have been heard and then the issue is expected to go to the legislature in the fall of 2005. If the GMO ban is implemented, PEI will quickly become a world leader and an example for other areas wishing to keep their land and air GMO free.

Marya Skrypiczajko is the author of BC the Organic Way – Where to Find Organic Food in British Columbia. *www.bctheorganicway.com*

Eating your way to health

NUTRISPEAK

by Vesanto Melina MS, RD

Our perceptions about diet and health have undergone remarkable transformations during the past half-century.

Fifty years ago, the hot topics in nutrition were protein-calorie malnutrition, deficiency diseases, and the recent discovery of the last of the thirteen vitamins. Today, while undernutrition continues to be a tragedy for one in six humans, an equal number are overweight, and one-third of these are obese.

In North America, our malnutrition is taking a peculiar form. We stuff ourselves with calories, animal protein and fat, and supplements containing whichever vitamin, mineral, or dried extract (powdered algae, shark cartilage, or bee product) has made recent headlines. For many, one fourth of our calories come from sugar and another 40 percent from fat, much of that saturated and transfats.

Legumes have an amazing nutritional profile, high in protein, low in fat, and rich in the fiber-containing carbohydrates

Yet intakes of vegetables and fruits, the most nutrient-rich foods on the planet, are sadly lacking. Legumes have an amazing nutritional profile, high in protein, low in fat, and rich in the fiber-containing carbohydrates that help us to maintain our blood glucose. However, many people would have trouble naming five legumes, and to use them in creating a delicious meal is beyond comprehension. (See if you can list five; then check the end of this article.*)

What happens when we stuff ourselves with calories, yet build our diets from non-nutritious foods? The outcome is evident in our medical clinics and hospitals: cardiovascular disease, cancers, diabetes, hypertension, strokes, and obesity. Every part of our body is impacted when cells fail to receive the hundreds of protective phytochemicals found in unrefined plant foods. Our food choices are the key factor in reducing our risk for these disabling diseases. How could it be otherwise?

If you would like to combine a springtime visit to the beautiful Okanagan with an informative, and inspiring event related to nutrition and health, here's a bargain. Attend the Okanagan Health Forum between April 8 and 10. www.okanaganhealthforum.com. You'll have a chance to hear Dr. Colin Campbell, author of The China Study whose research has made headlines in the New York Times. Campbell discovered that adding even small amounts of animal products to a simple plant-based diet increased one's risk for coronary artery disease and cancer, and established the links between casein (milk protein) and cancer. A second speaker is Cleveland cardiologist Caldwell Esselstyn, who teaches how to make yourself "heart-attack proof." A presenter who combines scientific expertise, motivation and glowing health is dietitian Brenda Davis, co-author of three books, *Defeating Diabetes, Becoming Vegetarian* and *Becoming Vegan*; her talk is called *Constructing the Optimal Diet*. As fourth speaker, my topic is food sensitivities. The cost of attending this forum is just $5. (Health professionals should note the sessions on April 8.)

For a tasty way to boost your intake of vegetables and legumes, try this pasta sauce. It is made with red lentils, the fastest cooking of all legumes; they cook in 20 minutes. The flavour develops best by simmering for an hour or more. If your family is just getting used to legumes, start with 1/2 cup of lentils; for added protein, use more.

Chunky red lentil tomato sauce

From *Becoming Vegetarian* by Melina and Davis, Wiley Canada, 2003.

4 cups	water
1 cup	red lentils
1	large onion, chopped
2-3	cloves garlic, minced
1	large carrot, sliced diagonally
1	stalk broccoli, chopped
1 cup	sliced mushrooms
1/2 cup	green pepper, diced
1	small zucchini, sliced or grated
28 oz	can stewed tomatoes
28 oz	can tomato sauce
2 tsp.	each, dried basil and oregano (or 2 tbsp fresh)
2 tbsp.	tamari or Bragg Liquid Soy
2 tbsp.	Cooking wine (optional)
2 tbsp.	miso (optional)

Place all ingredients in saucepan or crock pot; stir. If using a saucepan, bring ingredients to boil, then turn heat down and simmer sauce for about an hour. If using crock pot, cook on low for six to eight hours, or on high for about four hours. Serve with your favourite pasta. Leftover sauce freezes well.

Makes 11 cups (six hearty servings). Per serving: calories 158, protein: 9 grams, fat: 1 gram, carbohydrate 34 grams, iron 2.7 milligrams, calcium 113 mg.

*Legumes are plant foods that grow in pods; they include Anasazi, black, cranberry, kidney, lima, mung, navy, pinto, red and white beans; garbanzo beans (chickpeas); soybeans; lentils and peanuts.

Vesanto Melina is a registered dietitian, author and consultant www.nutrispeak.com. Her next food and nutrition workshop in the lower mainland will be a spring cleanse on May 7.

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Understanding the cancer epidemic - part 1

ENVIRONMENT

EARTHFUTURE.COM

by Guy Dauncey

A friend of ours died last week, here in Victoria. She was in her early fifties, and as lovely as they come. She was always contributing to the community in one way or another, helping the local horticultural society, always with a big smile.

She died after five years of battle, involving three major surgeries and three rounds of chemotherapy. She was very positive and heroic about it; her husband too. They understood the role of attitude, humour, stress, prayer, diet, and other things they hoped would make a difference. She died peacefully, her husband beside her. As deaths go, hers was a good one.

But why did she have to die? Every day, the obituary columns tell of men and women in their forties and fifties who are dying long before their time, their hopes, careers and contributions unfinished, their children, partners, parents and friends left to grieve. So what are they dying of that makes me angry and upset, instead of calm and peaceful?

Cancer. A huge epidemic of it. When I give talks and workshops these days, I often ask people to raise their hands if they have a friend or family member who has cancer. Almost every hand goes up. It's really astonishing.

We are used to hearing about the ecological disasters that are befalling the world's forests, oceans, and wildlife. We know, at some level, that it is the fault of human and corporate greed, riding rough-shod over ecosystems with a "humans-rule-nature" attitude.

We don't often think of cancer as an ecological disaster. We are told that it is a "lifestyle" disease. If we follow its "Seven steps to health," the Canadian Cancer Society tells us, we will reduce our risk of getting it: Don't smoke, eat healthy food, be active, be sensible in the sun, follow cancer screening guidelines, report changes in your health, and use caution with hazardous materials.

It's all very good advice, with the exception that mammograms as a preventive measure against breast cancer have been shown to have no value under the age of 50. But it is also deeply troubling. With the exception of a small nod in the direction of hazardous materials, it tells us that it's our fault if we get cancer. We smoked, we didn't eat enough green leafy veggies, we tanned too much, we watched TV when we should have been jogging. Guilt, guilt, guilt.

And yet all over North America, people are getting cancer who did none of these things. So are fish and animals, who don't smoke or eat junk food. The beluga whales in the St. Lawrence are getting cancers, while their cousins in the open Atlantic are not.

There's another huge story that's not being told here. Dr. Sam Epstein, professor of occupational and environmental medicine at the school of public health, University of Illinois Medical Center, is an internationally recognized authority on the toxic and carcinogenic effects of environmental pollutants in the air, the water and the workplace. His work shows that since the 1950s, in North America, there has been a 55 percent increase in cancer, when the statistics are standardized for the fact that people are living longer.

Childhood cancer of the brain and nervous system, 40 percent increase since 1975; male colon cancer, 60 percent increase; breast cancer, 60 percent increase; brain cancer in adults, 80 percent increase; prostate cancer, 100 percent increase; testicular cancer, 100 percent increase; estrogen-receptor positive breast cancer, 135 percent increase; non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and multiple myeloma, 200 percent increase; testicular cancer among men aged 28-35, 300 percent increase. In 1950, one in 20 women had breast cancer. Now it's one in eight

What is happening?

There are two levels we need to address – the ecological level, inside our bodies, where toxic influences are causing the cancers, and the human level, where political and commercial influences are covering up the causes.

In the world of cancer, it is very hard to establish proof. That needs a control group of humans who have not been exposed to any toxins, which is impossible to find. We can do it with rats, but not with humans. What we can do, however, is gather the weight of evidence, and come to a sensible, precautionary conclusion.

On the ecological level, here's some of the evidence:

In North America, homes that use chemical pesticides have a six-fold greater chance of children getting lymphoma. If you create a map of the geographical hotspots in the USA for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, the map follows the Great Plains agricultural areas, which have the highest level of pesticide use. Farmers have a higher rate of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, along with pesticide applicators, golf course supervisors, and Vietnam war veterans (Agent Orange). Dogs whose owners use weedkillers in their backyards are twice as likely to get the canine version of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Monsanto's herbicide glyphosate, also known as Roundup, has clear links to non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Continued in May issue.

Guy Dauncey is an author, speaker and sustainable communities consultant who lives in Victoria. www.earthfuture.com

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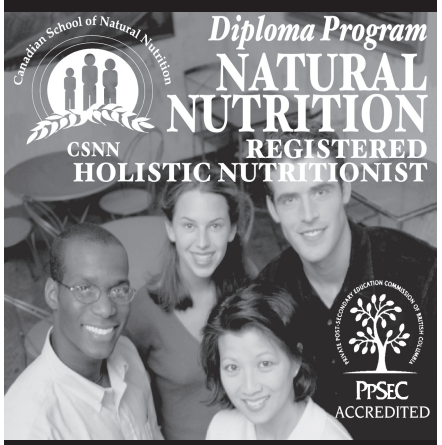

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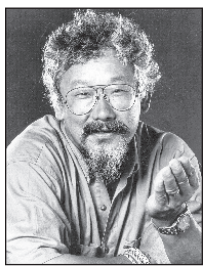

Climate science keeps on ticking

SCIENCE MATTERS

by David Suzuki

If you didn't know what the Kyoto Protocol was all about a few weeks ago, you'd be hard pressed not to know now. The international agreement to reduce the heat trapping emissions that are causing global warming has been all over the news since it came into force in February.

Leading up to the big day, I expected to hear from "both sides" of the issue in the media – those who felt that the agreement was an important first step to address a huge challenge for humanity, and those who felt that the targets would be too difficult to achieve in a short timeline.

What I didn't really expect was how the "climate change isn't happening" people crawled out of the woodwork, bleating about myths and conspiracy theories that somehow seemed to involve nutty left-wing scientists, government bureaucrats and the French.

Naïvely, I had assumed that this discussion was largely over, since these people had such little credibility. But there they were, being interviewed on television, in newspapers and on the radio – sometimes right alongside legitimate climate scientists or politicians. Over and over, they made bizarre pronouncements about how the science was uncertain and how humanity's hand in global warming could not be proven.

This continued insistence on "proof" even in the face of overwhelming evidence is simply bizarre. To say that we don't know enough about climate change to prompt action is to say that the entire discipline of science, as we know it, should not be trusted. Uncertainty is inherent in the scientific process. Currently, the vast majority of scientific evidence tells us that human activities are causing climate change and that it could have very serious consequences if we don't do something about it. Of course, the science could all be wrong – but I wouldn't bet our future on it.

Anyone who wants to know the real story on the current state of climate science should simply pick up a science journal.

Anyone who wants to know the real story on the current state of climate science should simply pick up a science journal. Or, to cut to the chase, read a short article by the University of California's Naomi Oreskes, published in the journal Science in December. Her analysis of all 928 peer-reviewed climate studies published between 1993 and 2003 found that not a single one disagreed with the general scientific consensus position on climate change.

Yet in spite of this, and in spite of the thousands of climate scientists who are working directly on this issue and are very concerned about it, from whom did we hear as Kyoto approached? A handful of pundits peddling warmed-over opinion articles and half-baked interviews. Yes, good dialogue, discussion and debate are vital to journalism, democracy and science. But it has to be informed dialogue, not conspiracy theories. And that is exactly what these people are serving up.

Of course, part of the problem is that journalism is fueled by conflict, so reporters will often dredge up a crusty commentator to make sure a story is "balanced." That may make for great TV drama, but it's giving industry and politicians an excuse to drag their heels on taking action. And heel dragging is hardly prudent in light of the science.

Our climate is a very complicated system. We don't know everything about how it works, but we're learning more each day. What we do know tells us that, by dumping vast quantities of emissions into the atmosphere, we are disrupting our climate in ways that may make it increasingly inhospitable.

The Kyoto Protocol, by itself, won't stop this from happening, but it's the first step towards an energy economy that could.

That won't stop some people from bleating their conspiracy theories and claims that everything is going to be just fine. Given how disturbing the real science is, I sincerely wish they were right.

Take the Nature Challenge and learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org.

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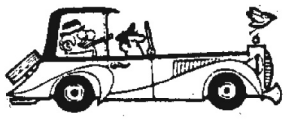

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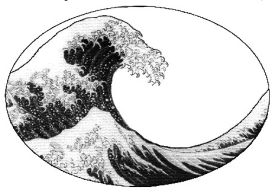

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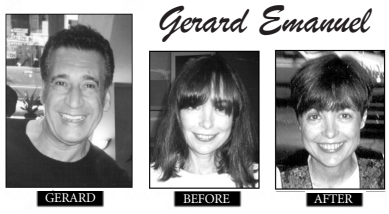

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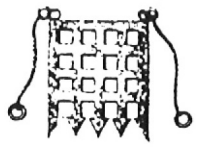

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April 6 Mediumship Demonstration Yvonne Colasanti; **April 13** Open Circle Glenda McLeod; **April 20** Mediumship Demonstration Barbara Leonard; **April 27** Crop Circles, Canadian investigator Chad Deetken. $8 ($7 members) SPECIAL EVENT: UK Medium Eileen Davies: **Fri April 15**: Mediumship Demonstration $25; **April 17** Sunday Service

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Blossom or bombs

TWENTY SOMETHING

by Ishi Dinim

This morning my friend woke me up from a groggy sleep. He was at my front door and I buzzed him up. I quickly threw on some sweatpants, put some chai on the stove and we sat down at the table and talked about life. We discussed earthbag houses, addictions, work, relationships, and then he gestured through the window, "You know all this is crap. What we need to do is make a sh_tload of money, then go travel to some really poor country and have them teach us something about life."

There's an Einstein saying that goes, "Today's problems cannot be solved by thinking the way we thought when we created them." I find my mind racing, wonderful and horrible ideas following each other: a new amaryllis growing in the sun, body parts scattered throughout a busy marketplace, children fervently chasing a soccer ball, opulent petroleum lords operating with impunity, back and forth like this all the time. I don't know if focusing in on one realm of thought for too long is…

It seems that over time I've been building invisible barriers. Criticizing myself for not doing "enough," not doing things "right," being scared to pursue my dreams, discounting my ideas as unimportant; the floor plans for a self-made creative prison. There is so much guilt around wasting time, living a privileged western life, saying too much or not enough, or even thinking the wrong thing. As it turns out I have a very personal relationship with the warden, and who better to deliberate with about an early release? Then I had a revelation, an idea, that maybe, just maybe, not producing anything for a time would be valuable. Going dormant for a period is a natural process, I don't always have to be go go go.

Today's problems cannot be solved by thinking the way we thought when we created them.

On another note, no less important than freeing oneself from bondage, is our upcoming provincial election. I see this upcoming election as the most important moment in recent Canadian political history. We have the chance not only to vote in a new government but we can actually change the democratic process. We have an opportunity to vote on a binding referendum that would usher in a single transferable voting system. The referendum needs 60 percent of voters to be in favor and requires 48 of 79 ridings to approve the change as well. During this election getting out and voting is more important than it ever has been and maybe ever will be again. We could set the trend by instituting truly democratic political change in North America.

When I'm done dwelling on grief, loss, and sickness I want to explode with love. Not a cliché sex thing. I want my every act to further a creative end, a supportive sustaining process. I'll just chill out in my sweatpants and ponder a little while longer.

Web links:

www.citizensassembly.bc.ca/public/extra/stv_resources.xml

www.getyourvoteon.ca

www.elections.bc.ca

www.ran.org/info_center/factsheets/03b.html

Quotes:

A human being is a part of the whole, called by us, "Universe," a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security.

- Albert Einstein

Yesterday we bowed for kings and bent our necks before emperors. But today we kneel only to truth, follow only beauty, and obey only love.

- Kahlil Gibran

Success is getting what you want. Happiness is wanting what you get.

- Dale Carnegie

Ishi graduated from Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in 2001, with a BFA major in photography. He makes films, collects cacti, and ponders many things. Currently he is trying to figure out what to do with the rest his life. contact ishi@yahoo.ca waiting to hear echoes back…

German filmmaker peers into the abyss

FILMS WORTH WATCHING

by Robert Alstead

Making a historical drama based on truth is a tricky business. The tendency is to play fast and loose with the facts to jazz up the story.

Downfall, a dramatization of the last two weeks of Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich, can't go there. Six decades on, the war seems more, rather than less, politically sensitive. Especially if you are a German filmmaker.

Oliver Hirschbiegel's film, set in large part in the claustrophobic confines of Hitler's bunker as the Allies close in, interprets events with rigorous attention to historical detail that is commendable. The fact that it takes a German perspective, with a large German-speaking ensemble, is undoubtedly what make it so intensely watchable. It's rare to see German filmmakers touch this subject.

That criticisms have been leveled at the film because it doesn't highlight the gruesome reality of Hitler's "final solution" is understandable. But in attempting to show the man behind the monster, it leaves you in absolutely no doubt about the chilling brutality of his reviled regime and of the man himself.

Bruno Ganz's performance as Hitler is a brilliant study of surface charm and reserved friendliness, that can switch in a second to explosive vitriol and demonic rage. It is strange that this brooding, isolated figure who haunts the dimly lit corridors of the bunker, one arm quivering behind his back from advancing Parkinson's disease, could command such respect. Yet, when all is clearly lost, Hitler's staff still lack the temerity to speak against him. Easier to indulge his fantasy that he has armies to wage war up above, than risk incurring his wrath. Such was the myth and fear that surrounded Der Fuhrer.

That criticisms have been leveled...is understandable. But...it leaves you in absolutely no doubt about the chilling brutality of his reviled regime...

Bernd Eichinger's screenplay is framed around the eyewitness account written by Hitler's last secretary, the late Traudl Junge, in *Until the Final Hour*. It draws also on *Inside Hitler's Bunker* by renowned Hitler biographer Joachim Fest.

Junge's suggestion that she was too naïve to see past Hitler's status may seem a little hollow, considering how rabidly anti-semitic her employer was. But her uncritical eyewitness account, she only left the bunker after Hitler's suicide, offers many intimate details about those last days, down to Hitler's table manners and how she would sneak out for a smoke with Hitler's devoted fiancé Eva Braun (Juliane Kohler) when the shelling stopped. Smoking disgusted Hitler.

Braun, wearing traditional folk dress and a brave smile, or madly rallying Hitler's staff to party as the bunker shudders from exploding shells, comes across as even sympathetic. Her relationship with Hitler is less as a lover than as a true believer. As she confides to Junge not long before her death, Hitler shows more affection to his dog Blondi than to her.

This disturbing romance is brought painfully into focus when, kneeling at Hitler's feet, she pleads that he spare her sister's husband, the careerist SS officer Fegelein. Hitler spits angrily that Fegelein is a traitor and must be shot. Braun wipes away the tears. "You are the leader," she suppliantly accepts.

The tragedy is that she is loyal, unquestioningly so to the end, a tragedy that was shared by a generation weaned on national socialist ideology and terror. The film is littered with suicides, none more shocking than when Magda Goebbels methodically drugs and then poisons her six children rather then let them live "in a world without national socialism."

We also see Berliners scrabble about in the rubble for survival. Russian bombs and soldiers bear down on one side and Nazi lynch mobs ready to string up "deserters" who refused to join the Volkstorm are on the other. This desperate last struggle is poignantly conveyed in the story of a boy soldier, Peter, whose veteran father urges him to quit the barricades and come home.

Unsurprisingly, there is that sense that history is written by the survivors. Albert Speer, Hitler's favourite architect, survived the war, and wrote about his experience. He is an ambivalent figure, despicable for his favoured status, but almost heroic when he disobeys Hitler's orders to follow a scorched earth policy at the end.

Another subplot about Professor Schenk, an SS doctor, who risks his life to help the wounded has been criticized for glossing his character. The man was linked with medical experiments on prisoners in Dachau.

The film may have flaws, but still it remains a serious and compelling insight into this dark era in Germany's history.

A resident of Vancouver, Robert Alstead also writes for www.iofilm.ca

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continued from page 17

and strokes.

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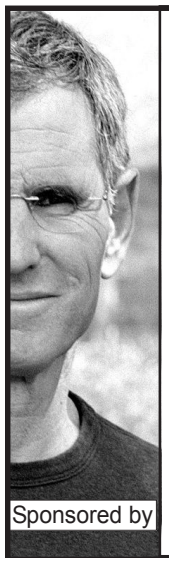
The likelihood of developing health problems is compounded when a person takes more than one drug which depletes the same nutrient. We have only been able to discuss the loss of a few nutrients from medications. To ensure you are not becoming nutrient deficient from your medications, you need to educate yourself about what you are taking and how it may affect the vital nutrients that are necessary for the proper functioning of our bodies. Seek information from knowledgeable professionals that specialize in medications and nutrition.

Dalia Taher, BSc Pharm, is a certified herbalist. info@finlandiapharmacy.com



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On Track Zodiac

April 2005 by Ilona Hedi Granik

ARIES (March 21 – April 19)
Come out, come out, wherever you are. All is revealed, including your ability to hide. You are showing people who you are. Put your best foot forward on the path toward your goals. You have stored your talents, but now they need to be expressed.

TAURUS (April 20 – May 21)
Good things come to those who persevere. Don't watch and wait, just get moving. The timing is right to lay a foundation that will last for years. You can reflect on your abundance in the coming months. Nourish your body to bring out the best in you.

GEMINI (May 22 – June 20)
With this cycle of new beginnings you take a leap of faith. Ask for what you want. Your natural divinity aligns with your desires. You have within your grasp all the necessary tools. You have all the time in the world. Be here now and walk peacefully.

CANCER (June 21 – July 22)
An investigation is under way. If insecurity has been part of your life, it should soon slide off your shoulders. Your moods flip from one colour of the rainbow to the next. A rolling stone gathers momentum and you are building an enduring resonance with your personal power.

LEO (July 23 – Aug. 22)
From a balanced position you seek what your heart knows at the deepest level. The truth is as plain as the nose on your face. If you can convey the facts, that is exactly what will come back– no mumbo jumbo. The layers beneath beg for personal assessment.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 – Sept. 22)
You seek to find others who understand you or at least share a common interest. The longing for have for kinship and community will get the best of you. You could even reach out and go beyond your comfort level. These could be wild times if you allow for it.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 – Oct. 22)
Your views of relationships have gone through a transformation. You gave up the illusion of perfection. With plenty of room to breathe now, the idyllic scenario will come into play. When the pupil is ready, the guide will show up with an arm full of presence.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 – Nov. 21)
You may be feeling very powerful, yet your emotions could be volatile. The expression can't find an outlet. By all means try to soothe your spirit in any way you can. If your way of meditating doesn't help, try a new technique. You are like a wild stallion and the one who needs to pull in the reigns.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 – Dec. 21)
Others will look to you for answers and solutions. Your leadership qualities will be equal to the task. Every attention to detail will be your goal. You have worked hard for the placement you are in and it shows that you are in the right place.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 – Jan. 19)
This is an excellent time to study or begin a new spiritual practice. Your focus is pinpointed, moving toward a center. People come into your life as emissaries. You have awakened from a dream and now you feel the Earth beneath your feet.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 – Feb. 19)
Organize your thoughts and clear the clutter in your living space. Ready yourself to present your ideas in concrete form. That foggy feeling can be stomped out. The time is approaching when you will need to walk your talk. Actions speak louder than inactivity.

PISCES (Feb. 20 – March 20)
Hang in there Pisces, you are almost out of the woods. Up ahead the road is clear. You have been dutiful in eliminating your feelings of inadequacy. You have evolved to higher level of wisdom. Personal liberty is your new frequency.

Ilona Hedi Granik is a clairvoyant consultant and author with 31 years of experience in astrology, multi-media art and healing. Ilona23@shaw.ca
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

List at: www.commonground.ca > Advertising > Datebook

DATEBOOK

APRIL 3

Earth Energy Changes, with Mary Ellen Flora, 1:00pm. The Ironworks Studio 235 Alexander St. You can re-learn to heal yourself and our world. Vancouver CDM (604) 730-8788.

APRIL 5, 12, 19, 26

Finding Purpose in Your Child's Behaviour, Communicating with Your Child, Encouragement vs. Praise, Discipline as a Learning Tool $15 per workshop Queen Elizabeth Elementary School, 921 Salter, New Westminster 4 Tuesdays 7-9:30pm. 604.525.7388

APRIL 6

The Only Path To Peace:Lecture and exhibit, Josephine Harrison, unique textile collages and photographs 6:30pm, lecture 7:00pm peace meditation. Potluck Rm. Capilano Library, 3045 Highland Blvd, Edgemont Village. 604 947 0926 www.taracanada.com

APRIL 8

Free information session on Pranic Healing, 7-9pm. Location TBA. For reservations call Jean Robillard at (604)325-7224 or email pranichealing@hotmail.com

APRIL 8, 9, 10

Introduction to Foot Reflexology commences Certificate Weekend Course. Intro: $10. Course: $295.00 Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818

APRIL 9

Shamanic Drumming Chanting Meditation Circle: Learn the journeywork way of the shaman for insight, healing, and empowerment. Newcomers welcome. Saturday 7pm. Donation. 604.418.9636. www.shamanichealing.info.

APRIL 11, 12

Diamond Approach Vancouver: a two-evening introduction. 6.30-9.30pm at Unitarian Church, Oak and 49th. $90.00 for both evenings. Registration or info 604 251 9034

APRIL 13

Story Slam, audience-judged story competition 9pm (sign-up 7-9pm during "Word Whips" Our Town Café, 245 E. Broadway

APRIL 15

Walking the Labyrinth with Jerry DesVoignes and the One Voice Harmonic Choir St. Paul's Labyrinth - 7-9pm 1130 Jervis St. By donation. Sacred chants/mantras, throat singing. jerry@healingvoices.net 604-872-7117

Liars of Orpheus, jamming with your spoken words. 11pm after "57 Varieties" open mike for all arts Butchershop Gallery, 195 E. 26th Ave.

APRIL 16-17

Intuitive Living and Being. Access, develop and strengthen your intuitive wisdom in this joyful residential workshop. Self Realization Meditation Healing Centre, Halfmoon Bay. 1-604-740-0898

APRIL 18

Fibromyalgia - the Journey Toward Healing Join medical herbalist Chanchal Cabrera as she discusses this debilitating condition Vancouver Public Library, Alice McKay room. 7pm

APRIL 20

Anne Fleming reads from "Anomaly" & Amanda Hale reads from "The Reddening Path" Armchair chat and sneak previews of novels due out this autumn 7:30 pm "Tigers", 2133 Granville St.

APRIL 21

MDA of BC Free presentation by Dr. Christine Taylor on Depression: Psychiatric Acute Hospital Care. 7pm, 1950 Windermere St. Wheelchair accessible. Call 604-873-0103.

APRIL 24

Full Moon Festival of Wesak. 7pm. Vancouver Public Library, 350 West Georgia Street, Peter Kaye Room. Free. Tara Canada: 604-988-TARA. taracanada.com.

APRIL 26

Tim Lilburn "As Though We Found Home" Poetry & armchair chat. 8pm Our Town Cafe, 245 E. Broadway

APRIL 29, 30, MAY 1

Introduction to Ear Reflexology commences Certificate Weekend Course. Intro: $10. Course: $295.00 Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818

MAY 1

Kits Classics + Worlds Beyond presents chamber music with guest percussionist Themba Tana 4:00pm 3214 W. 10th Ave. 604-732-3990 Free

MAY 7

2005 Great Salmon Send-off. Celebrate the return of salmon by releasing fry. Displays, refreshments and entertainment. All ages, free admission. 10:00am-2pm Stoney Creek Community School - 2740 Beaverbrook Crescent, Burnaby Linda Corrin 604-664-8849

MAY 17

Coaching Discovery Evening. Casual & informative - get an taste of Erickson College's unique solution-focused coaching approach. 2021 Columbia St. Vancouver 6:30-9:30pm $39. To register: 604-879-5600 www.erickson.edu

JUNE 13–25

Permaculture Design Course. Winlaw, B.C. Learn permaculture design principles & practical skills to implement ecological food producing ecosystems. 250-226-7302 permaculture@telus.net http://www3.telus.net/permaculture

JUNE 24-26

Chakra Workshop with Anodea Judith, author of "Eastern Body, Western Mind". Contact ravenandthefrog@hotmail.com.

SUNDAYS

The Centre for Spiritual Living Inspired by the teachings of Deepak Chopra and Louise Hay? You'll love our Sunday services, 11:00am. Children welcome. 1495 W. 8th Ave, Vancouver, 604-321-1225 www.cslvancouver.com

SUNDAYS

International Spiritualist Alliance #1A -320 Columbia Street, New West (Downstairs) 604-521-6336. Sunday Services 11am . Rev. Joyce Tarvin 604-433-6663 www.isacanada.ca

MONDAYS

Shambhala Buddhism Open House 7pm meditation instruction, sitting meditation practice. 8pm refreshments, Buddhist talk and/or video and discussion. Free. Shambhala Meditation Centre, 3275 Heather at West 17th.

Free acupuncture consultation (with acupuncture treatment only). Relief stress and pain etc. Acuqimed Centre at Broadway Station. B.C Reg. By appt: 604-961-8834

TUESDAYS

Reflexology Student Clinic sessions - only $15. Evenings only. By appointment. Pacific Institute of Reflexology. 604.875.8818

WEDNESDAYS

Hawaiian Healing Night 7pm. Hawaiian guided Meditation, Sharing the Aloha,and snacks after, meet like-minded people and share. $5.00 donation. At Hale Ola - a place of Healing 1215 Madison ave. Burnaby 604-431-7474 Kaimana and Moanikeala

Shambhala Open House 7pm meditation instruction, sitting meditation. 8pm refreshments, talk and discussion. Free. Shambhala Meditation Centre, 3275 Heather at West 17th.

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Meditation and Self-inquiry: Have you lost the balance and rhythm in your life? Let stillness (through self-inquiry) return your wholeness. 5-7 pm. 317-1613.

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ONGOING

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A Course in Miracles drop in study group, 7:30 pm, 517 E 17th St. North Van. Suggested drop in donation. Tuesdays & SundaysCall Susan 604 987-6985.

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continued from page 9

"I know how good I got it the first time."

When all I want to say is "Yeah, but grandma, you should see number five." (Like I said, that smut and diplomacy thing.)

So yeah, I'm in the grocery store, down aisle six, in my pink skirt and my boots with my questionable button on my T-shirt. And these two ladies are still staring at me and these are the things I'm thinking about:

I'm thinking about my bad language, my grandma and her sexuality, the ebb and flow of generational realities and the still taboo of coming across as slutty. I'm pondering the fear of our own bodies and bemoaning the unfortunate truth that the only words in the English language available for such beautiful things still sound dirty.

I'd love to know where the lines cross. I want wisdom, but just as I turn to ask the women, I realize they're gone. I think I can hear them now somewhere down aisle 4.

I heard there was a sale on tinned oysters.

Magpie Ulysses is a performance poet and writer raised in the Wild Yeeha of Alberta. She currently resides in Vancouver where she runs an etiquette school for young ladies.
magpieulysses@yahoo.ca

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continued from page 8

rewards those who convincingly carve out a false idol with the aid of a mirror.

(The self-aggrandizing hip-hop scene is one of the more obvious manifestations of this. The narcissism is hammered home so often it's become a kind of pop-culture white noise. In a scene from the MTV music video awards two years ago, white rapper Kid Rock took the podium, declaiming his triumphs as a "badass pimp" with the "bitches." A succession of posturing superstars stepped up to the podium, all with equally colourful descriptions of their awesome selves. "It's all about me," each star declaimed in so many words. The crowd, living vicariously through these swollen egos, roared assent.)

What do you tell someone who believes "me" to be the whole show? Do you tell them that if everyone else is thinking the same thing, it can't be anyone's show? In spite of what they may think, those who have built a temple to themselves aren't unique, autonomous beings – they're link sausages. The system cranks out personality after personality just like theirs. As they flip the bird to the world, you can only shake your head at these agents of ego, and how powerful the illusion of separation that they have bought into.

Next month we'll take a look at how pride has been spun by the self-esteem industry. Geoff Olson is a Vancouver writer and political cartoonist. gefo@telus.net

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continued from page 15

method of production. However, in general, small scale farmers must be involved in a democratically organized cooperative and plantation workers must have the right to unionize. Health and safety standards must be obeyed and programs implemented to improve environmental sustainability. Production facilities and organizations are inspected regularly and have to report to FLO. Prices paid for the product must cover the cost of production, a social premium paid to improve working and living conditions. Advance payment and long term contracts are given to avoid producer debt. The standards are constantly reviewed, by the standards and policy committee.

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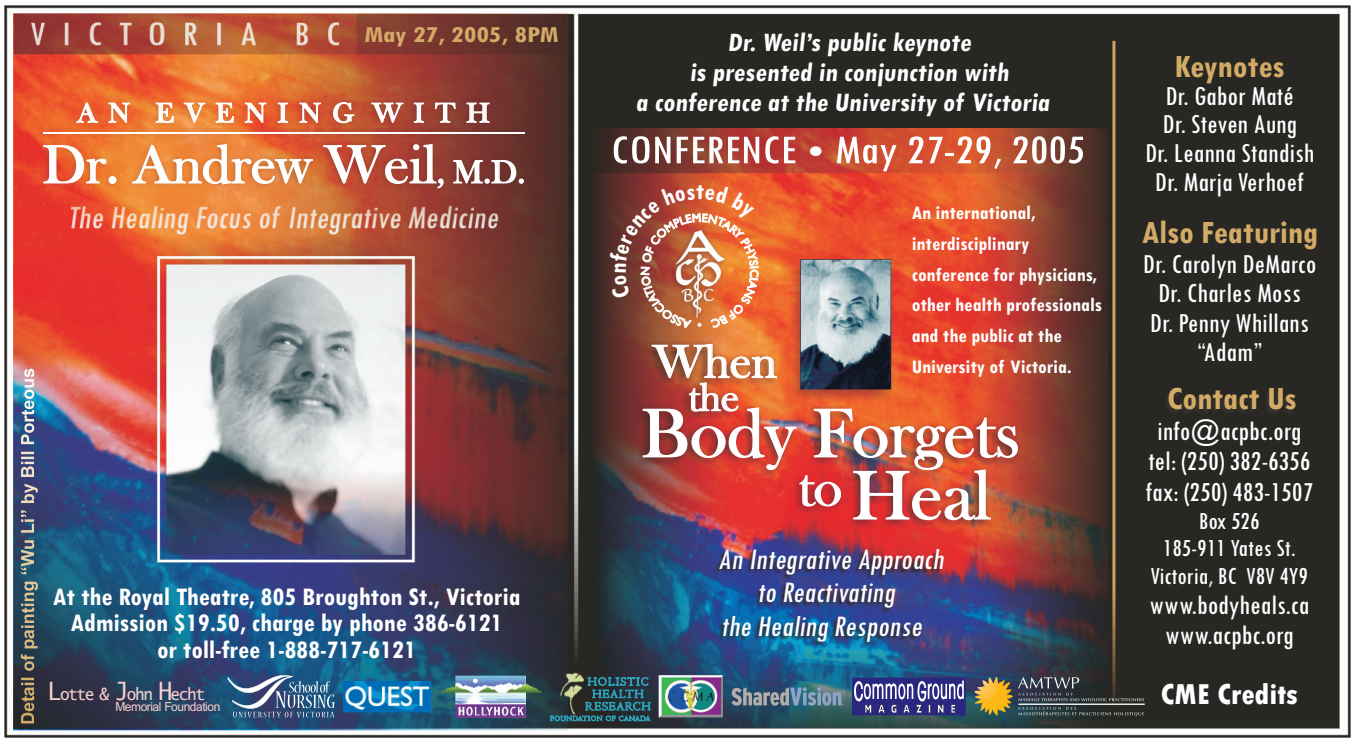
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continued from page 10

take-no-prisoners routines were meant to shock the audience out of their media-mediated trance. He explained his comedic philosophy to the *New Yorker* theatre critic John Lahr in 1993. "The best kind of comedy to me is when you make people laugh at things they've never laughed at, and also take a light into the darkened corners of people's minds, exposing them to the light. I thought the whole point of it was to make you feel un-alone."

Hicks didn't suffer fools gladly, and the feeling was sometimes mutual. After one show in the early eighties, two unimpressed Vietnam veterans followed him outside and broke his leg. "Sufficiently provoked, he would fire rounds of invective, his soft Texas accent hardening with contempt," writes Dennis Perrin in *Flak* magazine. The article quotes a standard Hicks response to hecklers: "Fuck you, you inbred, mouth-reading, *American Gladiator*-watching cracker piece of shit! Evolve!" Perrin adds that the comic "warned those who heckled him that he had 23 hours a day to concentrate on his arguments and "webs of conspiracy," and so they would be no match for him during the 24th hour on-stage." Hecklers rarely had comebacks to that.

Hicks frequently assailed television and the forces of mediocrity that offered up newly minted entertainers without talent or fire. In one scabrous Hicks routine, singer John Davidson is raped by Satan and spawns Debbie Gibson and *The New Kids on the Block*. By the time of his death in 1994, Hicks had honed his comedy into lethal sharpness, using it as much as a scalpel as a knife. The Letterman-friendly jokes were sidelined by material savaging the Bush 1 administration and corporate USA.

On October 1, 1993, Hicks performed his twelfth appearance on the* David Letterman Show*, and achieved the distinction of becoming the first comic to be censored at CBS...where Letterman held court and where Elvis Presley was famously censored in 1956.

The drawling brawler questioned many of the comfortable middle-class beliefs of his audience about education, politics, television, and drug use. "I've had some killer times on drugs," he once told an audience. After ingesting a "heroic dose" of psilocybin mushrooms, the Baptist-baiting comic understood why this fungus in particular is against the law:

"I laid in a field of green grass for four hours going 'My God, I love everything.' The heavens parted, God looked down and rained gifts of forgiveness, acceptance and eternal love from His unconditional heart, and I realized the true nature of my existence, of all our existence, is God's perfect and holy sunship, that we are spirit, we are not bodies, we are mind, we are thoughts in God's mind, his beloved children, and that has never changed, and anytime that you look through the body's eyes you are seeing illusions… I'm glad they're (mushrooms) against the law, because imagine how that would fuck up this country."

Such psychedelic observations were the unexpected adjuncts to Hicks's routines about hunting down and killing the singer of *Achy-Breaky Heart*, Billy Ray Cyrus.

If his material was exclusively critical or negative, the tough-minded Texan would have been remembered as a talented, if one-sided, footnote in comedy history. But a portion of his stage routine ventured into territory no nationally broadcast comic has covered before or since. The drug jokes shaded into routines about the human potential for love, transformation, and transcendence. A small but consistent part of Hicks's routine, his belief in the unplumbed depths of our existence was based in part on his readings of the Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung. The anticorporate, antigovernment rants were comic grenades tossed into the audience; but the real bomb was Hicks's Gnostic nyuks about eternity and the soul. Though most of his material was dark, his "light" material was blazingly clear.

This wasn't quite what the two-drink minimum crowd was expecting. According to an article in *Stylus* magazine, "right up to the end he was balancing the paradox of playing packed theatres in Europe and coming home and confronting 100-200 seat venues full of apathetic tourists." Although his celebrity in the US had plateaued with all but a core group of rabid fans, the panjandrums of the US entertainment-industrial complex could not fail but notice this international artist in their midst.

On October 1, 1993, Hicks performed his twelfth appearance on the *David Letterman Show*, and achieved the distinction of becoming the first comic to be censored at CBS Ed Sullivan theatre, where Letterman held court and where Elvis Presley was famously censored in 1956. "Presley was not allowed to be shown from the waist down," wrote *New Yorker* theatre critic John Lahr, "Hicks was not allowed to be shown at all."

To Lahr, Hicks was "was no motor-mouth vulgarian but an exhilarating comic thinker in a renegade class all his own." Not ready for prime time, in other words, or late night television for that matter. Hicks had obviously done something to offend the illuminati at CBS, though his material had been pre-approved weeks earlier. (Hicks had to supply the CBS honchos with a script weeks before taping). Never broadcast, this part of Letterman's October 1, 1993 show was unseen by the huddled masses of late night television.

Letterman had been seen to laugh during the set, and the word in the green room was also good, writes Lahr. "A couple of hours later, Hicks was back in his hotel, wearing nothing but a towel, when the call came from Robert Morton, the executive producer of the Letterman show, telling him he'd been deep-sixed." Although all his material had been previously approved, someone stepped in and deemed his rou-

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tine offensive or problematic. Even up to the end – especially at the end – Hicks's speech was far too free for the USA.

(The suspect part of his set may have been his routine about pro-life organizations, where he encouraged them to lock arms and block cemeteries instead of medical clinics. During the following week's Letterman show, a commercial for a pro-life organization reportedly aired. This provided ironic support for one of Bill's main themes, that America was being sanitized into mindlessness by corporate sponsorship.)

Within the year, the chainsmoking comic was diagnosed with cancer of the pancreas. In one of his last appearances, "he was frighteningly skinny, wore a patchy beard, tweed sport coat and saggy khakis," according to Jack Boulware in *Salon*. "Three months away from dying, and he was going for it, still in the saddle, riding the horse all the way down." The set included a scatalogical routine in a bathtub involving Rush Limbaugh, Barbara Bush and Reagan. At the show's close, Hicks played *Rage Against the Machine*, singing along with the chorus, "Fuck you, I won't do what you tell me!"

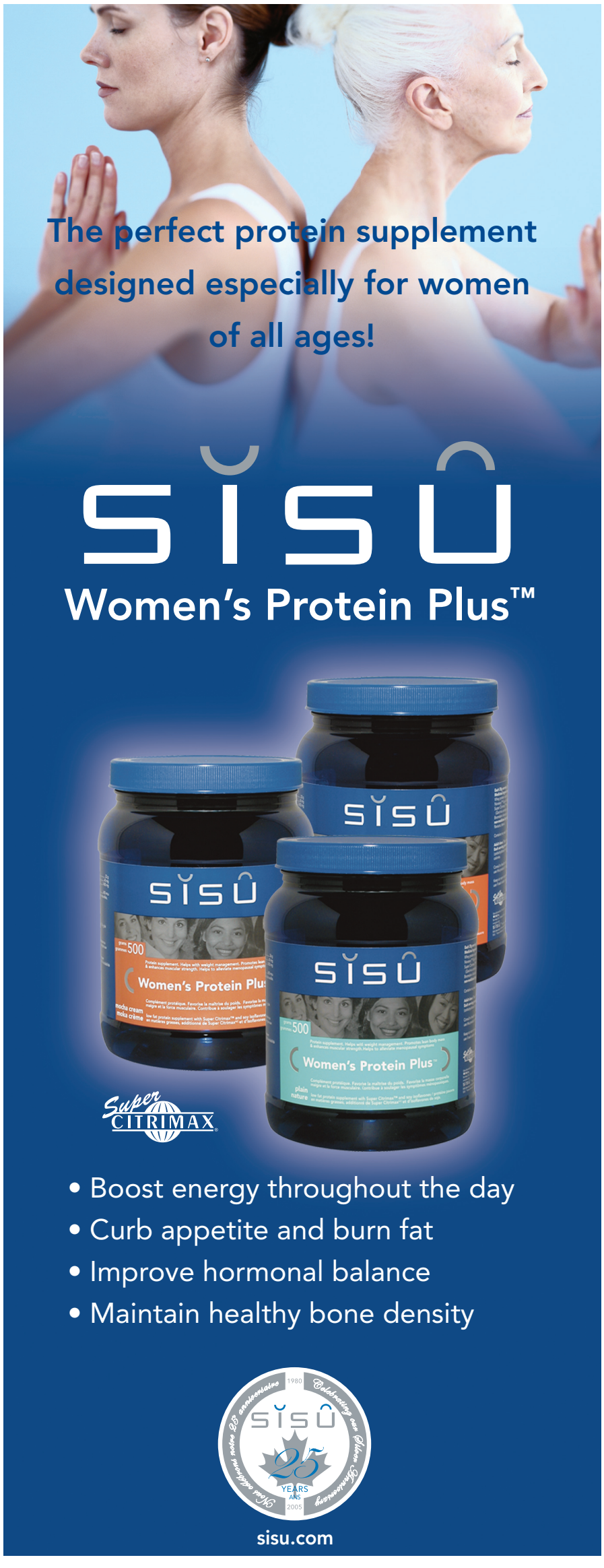
But the dying comic's best stage ending is preserved on the 1992 comedy album *Revelations*, probably his most famous routine:

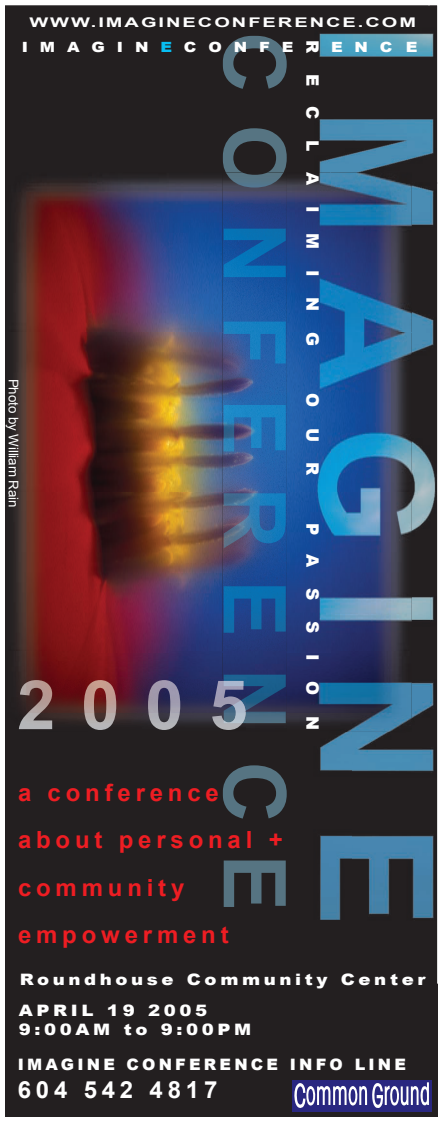
"The world is like a ride at an amusement park. It goes up and down and round and round. It has thrills and chills and it's very brightly coloured and it's very loud and it's fun, for a while. Some people have been on the ride for a long time and they begin to question, is this real, or is this just a ride? And other people have remembered, and they come back to us, they say, 'hey – don't worry, don't be afraid, ever, because, this is just a ride...' And we... kill those people. Ha ha 'Shut him up. We have a lot invested in this ride. Shut him up. Look at my furrows of worry. Look at my big bank account and my family. This just has to be real.' It's just a ride. But we always kill those good guys who try and tell us that, you ever notice that? And let the demons run amok. Jesus murdered; Martin Luther King murdered; Malcolm X murdered; Gandhi murdered; John Lennon murdered; Reagan.... wounded."

"But it doesn't matter because: It's just a ride. And we can change it anytime we want. It's only a choice. No effort, no work, no job, no savings or money. A choice, right now, between fear and love. The eyes of fear want you to put bigger locks on your doors, buy guns, close yourself off. The eyes of love, instead, see all of us as one. Here's what we can do to change the world, right now, to a better ride. Take all that money that we spend on weapons and defence each year and instead spend it feeding and clothing and educating the poor of the world, which it would many times over, not one human being excluded, and we could explore space, together, both inner and outer, forever, in peace. Thank you very much, you've been great."

And with that, Hicks turned to walk off the stage. He imitated three gunshots into the microphone, and pretended to fall down dead. The lights went out, and the show was over.

Geoff Olson is a Vancouver writer and political cartoonist. gefo@telus.net





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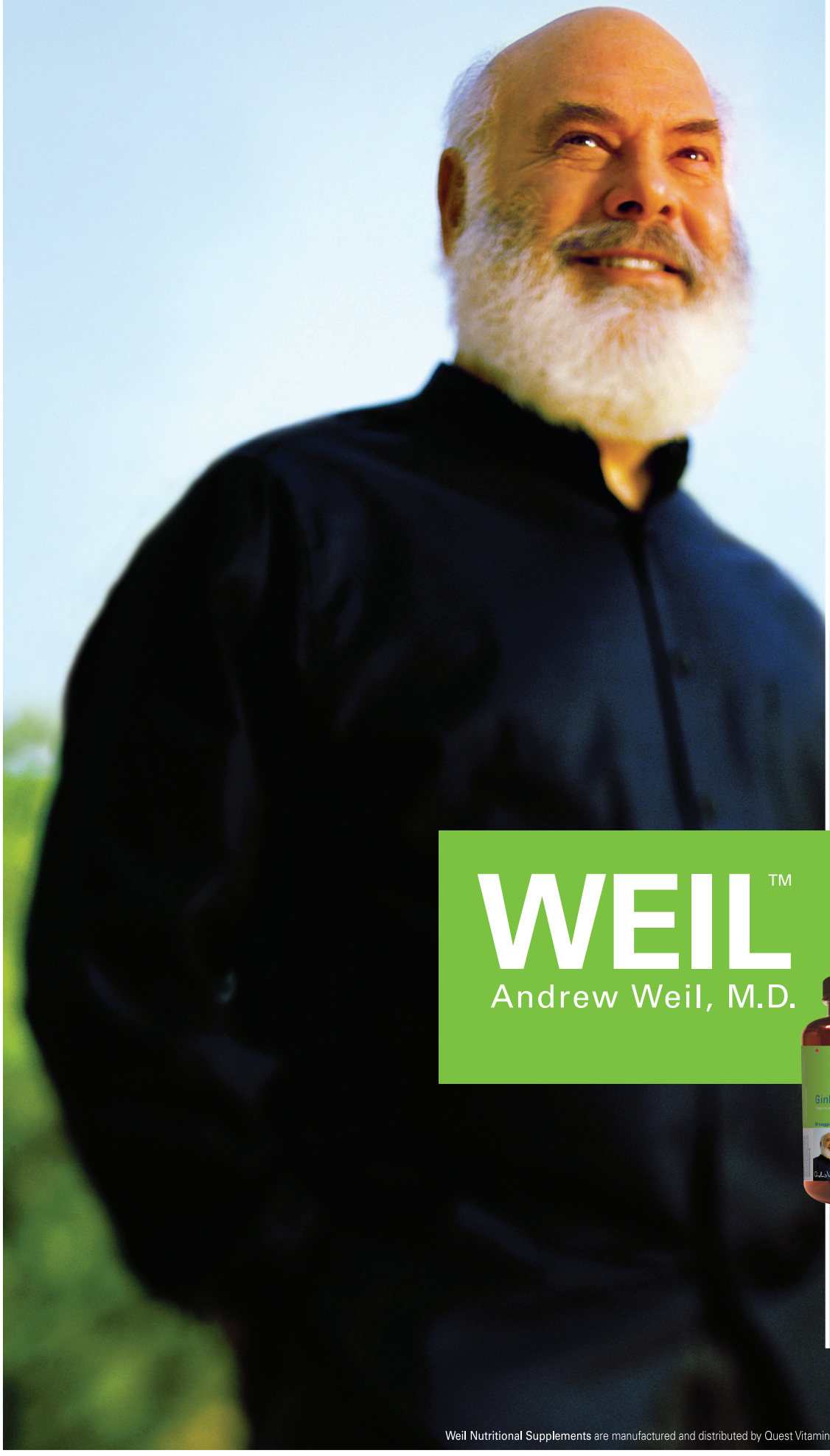

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